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CRISES AND PERCEPTIONS IN ENDURING RIVALRIES

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ABSTRACT

The thesis assesses the impact of tense international crises on leadership perceptions, across enduring rival and non-rival dyads. Associated in the relevant literature with escalation and conflict, interstate militarized crises are systematically explored in order to ascertain their impact on perceptions. Cognitive theories of decision making suggest that rationality is compromised in crises, as emotional stress, time constraints and pervasive uncertainty intensify cognitive rigidities among policy makers. A strong possibility, therefore, exists that leaders will be oblivious to crucial information, which will either be neglected or erroneously interpreted. In that sense, crises are viewed with apprehension by analysts, fearing misperception and miscalculation that may lead to unintended war. Through a detailed assessment of severe crisis case studies (The Greco-Turkish Aegean Sea crisis of 1996, the Russo-Georgian War of 2008 and the Cypriot S-300 missile crisis of 1998), this thesis suggests that crises may, contrary to expectations, shed light on long-running trends which were ignored or misinterpreted by decision makers, thereby "forcing" an accurate re-assessment of enemy and third party intentions and capabilities. Therefore, by posing a clarifying (shock) effect on leadership perceptions, cognitive mechanisms in crises could actually act supportively in drawing accurate inferences, bolstering objectivity.

To the memory of my late father

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Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Sydney or any other institution.

List of Abbreviations

EU: European Union

EUR: Euros

km: Kilometers

MFA: Minstry of Foreign Affairs

MID: Militarized Interstate Dispute

n.m.: Nautical Miles

SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNCLOS: United Nations Conference on the Law of the Seas.

US: United States

USD: United States Dollars

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Chapter 1:

Introduction: Rivalries
and the Research Question

What is the impact of tense international crises on leadership perceptions? More specifically, do decision makers' perceptions across enduring rival dyads become more or less accurate due to international crises? The concept of rivalries was first articulated when scholars suggested that certain state dyads appeared to be systematically more war-prone than other antagonistic dyads.[1] Rivals, however, have been the subject of inquiry for centuries. Indeed, from Athens and Sparta to the Cold War superpower duel, enduring rivalries have shaped our understanding of international affairs. Studies such as those treating the US-USSR[2] or the Arab-Israeli[3] rivalries provided valuable insight on the historical development of individual cases, despite their limited contribution to theory development.

This is because scholars have only recently conceptualized rivalries as a phenomenon in its own right, despite their ubiquity throughout the history of international affairs. A number of rivalry definitions have been suggested throughout the years, but rivalries can generally be conceived as "interstate conflicts in which the parties persistently perceive each other as protracted security threats and repeatedly engage in military disputes."[4] Nevertheless,

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[1] Goertz, G. and P. Diehl (1992), "The empirical importance of enduring rivalries," *International Interactions*, 18:2, pp. 151-163.

[2] Nincic, M. (1989), *Anatomy of hostility: The U.S.-Soviet rivalry in perspective*, San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

[3] Herzog, C. (1982), *The Arab-Israeli Wars: War and Peace in the Middle East*, London: Arms and Armour.

[4] Mor, B. (2004), "Strategic beliefs and the formation of enduring international rivalries: Israel's National Security Conception, 1948–56," *International Relations*, 18:3, p. 311. Maoz and Mor were first to combine behavioral and perceptual elements in their definition of enduring rivals: Maoz, Z. and B. Mor (2002), *Bound by*

scholars have been unable to agree on a single definition, and as a result, the issue of rivalry definition remains contentious to this day.

Disagreements regarding the definition of rivalries did not prevent the evolution of scholarly research. Rivalries have been used as a case selection mechanism in studies of phenomena such as deterrence[5] or power distributions.[6] Other, more ambitious clusters of research focused on recurrent behavioral patterns across rival dyads[7] and researchers even embarked upon an effort to investigate intra-rivalry dynamics.[8] Research on rivals, however, was unable to shed light on the specific importance of the concept, with a number of scholars coming to question the very existence of the phenomenon, claiming that perhaps chance alone could account for rival belligerence.[9]

Gartzke and Simon, specifically, suggested that the belief that certain conflicts are somehow related may actually be generated by a human tendency to see patterns in randomness. The so called "hot hand' phenomenon owes its name to basketball, where a player "gets hot" if he scores a few shots in a row or "gets cold" when he misses a number of successive shots. Statistics indicate that the probability of

struggle: the strategic evolution of enduring international rivalries, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

[5] Huth, P. and B. Russett, (1993), "General deterrence between enduring rivals: testing three competing models," *American Political Science Review,* 87:1, pp. 61-73.

[6] Geller, D., (1993), "Power differentials and war in rival dyads", *International Studies Quarterly*, 37:2, pp. 173-194.

[7] Brecher, M. and J. Patrick (1988), "Patterns of crisis management," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 32:3, pp. 426-456; Goertz, G. and P. Diehl (1995), "The initiation and termination of enduring rivalries: The impact of political shocks," *American Journal of Political Science*, 39:1, pp. 30-52; Bennett, S. (1996), "Security, bargaining, and the end of interstate rivalry", *International Studies Quarterly,* 40:2, pp. 157-183.

[8] Maoz, Z. (1984), "Peace by empire? Conflict outcomes and international stability, 1816-1976," *Journal of Peace Research,* 21:3, pp. 227-241; Maoz, Z. and B. Mor, (1996), "Enduring rivalries: the early years," *International Political Science Review*, 17:2, pp. 141-160; Hensel, P. (1996), "Charting a course to conflict: territorial issues and interstate conflict, 1816-1992," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 15:1, pp. 43-73.

[9] See for instance Gartzke, E. and M. Simon (1999), "Hot Hand: A Critical Analysis of Enduring Rivalries," *Journal of Politics,* 63:3, pp. 777-798.

scoring a shot is in no way related to previous attempts.[10] Gartzke and Simon offered a similar critique to the rivalry research program, asserting that even though states with a history of enmity "are more likely to engage in additional disputes," there is no reason to assume that "previous disputes are causal."[11]

Despite the presence of works that cast doubt on the validity of the phenomenon, a voluminous research produced on the subject indicates that the significance of rivalries is now widely acceptable and has been well documented. Diehl and Goertz, for instance, concluded that over fifty percent of rivals have been engaged in war at some point. Thompson suggested a different definition of rivalries according to which seventy-five percent of rivals experience war. [12] Enduring rivalries, moreover, account for a disproportionate fraction of other critical incidents, including violent territorial changes as well as international crises.[13]

The study of rivalries represents a promising direction in the study of international conflict. Instead of analyzing the origins of armed conflict in isolation, the rivalry research program suggests that interstate conflict is somehow connected across time and space. The underlying assumption is that relations under this context operate differently compared to non-rivalry affairs and therefore, existing theories may not adequately account for rivalry dynamics. As Goertz and Diehl point out, "these repeated conflicts between the same dyad are related to one another" and therefore "explaining war requires understanding the relationship between these

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[10] Gilovich, T. et. al. (1985), "The Hot Hand in Basketball: On the Misperception of Random Sequences," *Cognitive Psychology*, 17:2, pp. 295–314.
[11] Gartzke and Simon, "Hot Hand," p. 782.
[12] Colaresi, M. and W. Thompson (2002), "Strategic rivalries, protracted conflict, and crisis escalation," *Journal of Peace Research*, 39:3, pp. 263-287.
[13] Hensel, P. (1998), "Interstate rivalry and the study of militarized conflict," in F. Harvey and B. Mor (eds.), *Conflict in world politics: advances in the study of crisis, war and peace*, London, UK: Macmillan, pp. 162-204.

disputes."[14] While the literature has investigated in great detail the behavioral aspects of the phenomenon, such as rivalry onset, evolution and termination,[15] a persistent uncertainty over the sources of hostility within rival dyads continues to inhibit theory development.

This research project aims to investigate the impact of tense militarized crises on rivals' perceptions, by comparing the impact of crises between rival and non-rival leadership perceptions. Perceptions were selected as the object of scrutiny, as the literature indicates that they may have a significant importance to rivalries, even though psychological dynamics within rivalries remain underexplored. Some scholars are already convinced, however, that psychological factors play a prominent role in rivalries. Thompson, a key figure in the study of the phenomenon, asserts that "….rivals deal with each other in a psychologically charged context of path-dependent hostility."[16] In other words, rivals determine present actions by referring to the past record of conflict.[17] The (rather implicit) assumption here is that past conflictual events are somehow "internalized" by policy-makers, thereby altering their perceptions of the present.

Assuming that previous encounters psychologically "charge" bilateral relations, crises can be reasonably expected to exacerbate misperceptions in enduring rivalries. Crises are situations characterized by a severe threat to important values,

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[14] Goertz, G. and P. Diehl (2000), "Rivalries: The Conflict Process," in J. Vasquez (ed.), *What Do We Know About War?*, Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, p. 222.

[15] Goertz, G. and P. Diehl (1993), "Enduring rivalries: theoretical constructs and empirical patterns," *International Studies Quarterly*, 37:2, pp. 147-171; Goertz and Diehl, "The initiation and termination of enduring rivalries"; Huth, P. et. al. (1992), "System uncertainty, risk propensity, and international conflict among the great powers," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 36:3, pp. 478-517; Vasquez, J. (1996), "Distinguishing rivals that go to war from those that do not: a quantitative comparative case study of the two paths to war," *International Studies Quarterly*, 40:4, pp. 531-558.

[16] Thompson, W. (2001), "Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly*, 45:4, p. 558.

[17] Colaresi M. et. al. (2007), *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics: Position, Space and Conflict Escalation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 21.

a finite time for coping with the threat and a high probability of war.[18] In this regard, the study of crises and their impact on perceptions appears to constitute an appropriate research locus, as crises are acknowledged to be the most intense type of militarized interaction, short of war. Thus, the research project is well-positioned within the wider decision-making literature and the "psychological" narrative described above, regarding the impact of crises on decision-making, would fit with the prevailing "cognitive" paradigm in International Relations.

Indeed, crises are believed to exacerbate misperception, posing a danger for miscalculation and conflict. Cognitive theories of decision-making suggest that rationality is compromised in crises, as emotional stress, time-constraints and pervasive uncertainty intensify cognitive rigidities among policy-makers.[19] Policy-makers may, for instance, fail to pay heed to information contradicting their previously held beliefs, undermining their capacity to receive and process new information. Consequently, erroneous perceptions are likely to arise, resulting in problematic policies, with inadvertent escalation and war constituting a strong possibility.[20] In that sense, crises are viewed with apprehension by analysts, fearing misperception and miscalculation that may lead to unintended war. The causal importance of misperception for the outbreak of international conflict has been well documented, especially with reference to the World Wars.[21]

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[18] Brecher, M. (1980), *Decisions in Crisis*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, pp. 1 – 6.

[19] See for instance Jervis, R. (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Janis, I. (1989), *Crucial Decisions: Leadership in Policymaking and Crisis Management*, New York and London: Free Press.

[20] Snyder, G. and P. Diesing, (1977), *Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press; Winter, D. (2003), "Asymmetrical Perceptions of Power in Crises: A Comparison of 1914 and the Cuban Missile Crisis", *Journal of Peace Research*, 40:3, pp. 251-270.

[21] White, R., (1970), "Misperception as a Cause of Two World Wars," in *Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars*, Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books, pp. 3-33; Christensen, T. and J. Snyder (1990), "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization*, 44:1, pp. 137-168; Winter, "Asymmetrical Perceptions of Power in Crises."

Theoretically, however, there is no reason why an opposing narrative cannot be supported. Contrary to the prevailing view in the literature, this thesis explores the possibility that such incidents may actually enhance the accuracy of leadership perceptions. By "forcing" leaders to focus their attention on the "enemy," and the strategic environment of the particular incident, crises could render leaderships aware of long-running trends that had been hitherto ignored. Crises, in that sense, could act supportively in making accurate inferences, bolstering objectivity. Under no circumstances, however, does this "rational"[22] hypothesis, render uncertainty obsolete, as the latter is subject to a multitude of factors which can solely be ascertained in the battlefield. The goal of this research project, therefore, is to determine whether crises render leadership perceptions more, or less, accurate among rival and non-rival dyads. Thus, the main research question is:

> **"Do decision makers' perceptions across rival and non-rival dyads become more or less accurate due to international crises?"**

In accordance with the competing "rational" and "cognitive/psychological" narratives exposed above, the following hypotheses can be generated and tested:

Hypothesis 1a: Crises should render leadership perceptions more, not less, accurate.

Hypothesis 1b: Crises should have a particularly clarifying effect on rival dyad perceptions due to the familiarity and accumulated knowledge of contestants.

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[22] Rationality is not used in an absolute, "substantive" sense (optimal decisions), but in a procedural sense, denoting behaviour "adaptive within the constraints imposed both by the external situation and by the capacities of the decision maker," indicating decisions are analytically based. See Simon, H., (1985), "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science," *American Political Science Review,* (79:2), p. 294.

The null hypothesis is consistent with the "psychological/cognitive" narrative: Crises should heighten misperception across both rival and non-rival state dyads. We would also expect rival dyads to be particularly affected by misperception, as rivalries posit a decision-making environment ridden with hostility and exacerbated threat perceptions.

The underlying logic of the "rational" narrative is that the capacity to adopt policies which are incompatible with existing perceptions is robust. Theoretically, there is no reason to discard the notion that crises may actually have a clarifying effect on perceptions. Cognitive mechanisms do operate in crises; however, they could actually act supportively in drawing accurate inferences, bolstering objectivity. Even when cognitive rigidities are pervasive, such as during crises, powerful stimuli may re-instate analytic rationality, forcing novel thinking in the face of imminent danger. The high stakes associated with militarized crises lead to a thorough re-evaluation and adjustment of preconceptions, enhancing leaders' openness to new and potentially contradicting information.[23] As a result, assumptions could be re-evaluated and if necessary, re-configured, with perceptions becoming more, not less, accurate.

Rivalries could indeed be cases in which rationality is harder to reinstate, because prior interactions have established a negatively charged relationship. However, the capacity of leaders to perceive changes during crises could be enhanced due to the attention and resources devoted to the assessment of the "other." Without prejudice to the case study assessment, one could suggest that mechanisms

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[23] See for example Raphael, T., (1982), "Integrative Complexity Theory and Forecasting International Crises: Berlin 1946-1962," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 26:3, pp. 423-450; Mor, B. (1991), "Nasser's Decision-making in the 1967 Middle East Crisis: A Rational-choice Explanation," *Journal of Peace Research*, 28:4, pp. 359-375.

operating in enduring rivalries can accelerate the impact of rational "perceptual shocks." Rivals, due to the high stakes associated with their antagonism and their history of tense interaction, possess extensive intelligence gathering capabilities, numerous channels of communication and a wide array of past experiences from which they can draw accurate inferences in times of crisis. During inter-state crises, the leadership's "realignment" could take place swiftly due to these assets, leading to the enactment of sound policies and effective crisis management.

Contrasting the aforementioned "rational" hypothesis, the null hypothesis adheres to the "cognitive" or "psychological" narrative of decision-making. The innate propensity of individuals to see information as confirming preexisting expectations "about how the world works and what patterns it is likely to present us with,"[24] renders policy makers prone to distort or dismiss as unreliable incoming evidence or information which is incompatible with pre-existing beliefs.[25] In crises, the effect should be even more pronounced, as the presence of emotional stress, time-constraints and pervasive uncertainty can intensify cognitive rigidities among policy-makers.[26] Crises should generate threat perceptions which, in time, can create a "psychological atmosphere of fear and anxiety."[27] A strong possibility, therefore, exists that leaders will be oblivious to crucial information, which will either be neglected or wrongly interpreted.[28]

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[24] Jervis, R. (1985), "Perceiving and Coping with Threat," in R. Jervis et. al., *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, p. 18.

[25] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics,* pp. 187-190.

[26] See for instance Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*; Janis, *Crucial Decisions*.

[27] Senese, P. and J. Vasquez (2008), *The Steps to War: An Empirical Study*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 34.

[28] Jervis, R. (1968), "Hypotheses on Misperceptions", *World Politics*, 20:3, p. 459.

Chapter 2:

Enduring Rivalries in International Relations

2.1: Identifying Rivalries

Before exploring the rivalry phenomenon, it is crucial to emphasize potential divisions and disagreements which could affect case selection and research outcomes. It is important to note at this early stage that there is no consensus on the specific dyads that constitute the rivalries population. Scholarly work frequently cites rivalries as a widely endorsed concept, but fails to mention that different scholars mean different things when they analyze the phenomenon. Nevertheless, a short list of popular rivalries which are unanimously accepted as such does exist and is illustrative of the potential impact of rivalries in the study of world politics. Dyads such as India and Pakistan or the two Koreas underpin the contemporary importance of enduring rivalries, a phenomenon which can be traced back to antiquity, starting with the Greco-Persian Wars.

The archetypical rivalry between the Greek city-states and the Persian Empire is truly indicative of the repercussions these antagonisms may bear in international politics. The particular rivalry effectively (re)shaped the balance of power in the ancient international system until another rival dyad, Athens and Sparta, led the once dominant Greek world to an escalating spiral, culminating in the catastrophic Peloponnesian War. The rivalry phenomenon is thus not simply a constant throughout history, but is also associated with major changes in the international system. However, its presence is not limited in great power antagonism.

According to one definition, over 90% of armed conflicts occurring after the end of World War II were undertaken between enduring rivals.[1]

While a consensus on the importance of rivals is gradually established in the discipline, agreement on most other assumptions regarding enduring rivalries remains elusive. For starters, the origins of rivalries have yet to be illuminated. While some authors claim that one should seek the "birth" of rivalry dynamics in psychological factors,[2] other scholars disagree, suggesting that rivalries can exist outside a psychologically charged relationship.[3] Operationalizing rivalries has proven equally divisive for scholars studying the phenomenon: A certain number of Militarized Interstate Disputes (MIDs) was suggested as a necessary precondition to identify a rival pair, though the precise numerical threshold was never agreed upon. Another group of scholars favored a qualitative, as opposed to a quantitative, criterion, maintaining that the examination of the historical record should identify persistently hostile dyads. The result is the fragmentation of the research effort. Across six major methodological approaches used to derive rival dyads from a total pool of 355 potential cases, only 23 dyads (corresponding to only 6.5%) are unanimously adopted as cases of enduring rivalry.[4]

Even the dyadic nature of rivalries has been cast into doubt, with scholars suggesting that the concept should be expanded to include protracted hostile interactions between more than two actors. Diehl and Goertz presented a solid

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[1] Colaresi, M. et. al. (2007), *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics: Position, Space and Conflict Escalation*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 89.
[2] Vasquez, J. (1996), "Distinguishing rivals that go to war from those that do not: a quantitative comparative case study of the two paths to war," *International Studies Quarterly*, 40:4, p. 553; Maoz, Z. and B. Mor (2002), *Bound by Struggle: The Strategic Evolution of Enduring International Rivalries*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, p. 5.
[3] Levy, J. (1999), "The rise and decline of the Anglo-Dutch rivalry, 1609–1689," in: W. Thompson (ed.), *Great Power Rivalries*, Columbia, SC: The University of South Carolina Press, p. 174.
[4] Colaresi et. al., *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics*, p. 57.

case when they suggested that trilateral or multilateral competitions, such as the Cold War era USSR-China-U.S.A. and NATO versus the Warsaw Pact members respectively, could be classified as historical examples of rivalries.[5] Diehl notes however, that what is perceived as a multilateral rivalry may be concealing a dyadic competition at its core.[6]

On a more positive light, convergences on crucial rivalry traits do exist. The most important treatises concur that two fundamental elements distinguish rival from non-rival dyads engaging in isolated conflicts: The existence of a) a temporal dimension, and b) issue competition. The temporal dimension refers to the persistence of an adversarial relationship for a substantial time period.[7] However, rivalries of short duration can also exist. The core issue with regards to the temporal dimension is not longevity, but the expectation that past events affect the present behaviour of rivals.[8] Rival dyads at any given point are thus expected to be affected by the history and the future expectations of the conflict, so that one cannot view "specific conflicts as independent phenomena" or "extract them from their rivalry streams without distorting the context in which they occur."[9]

Issue competition, on the other hand, is what one usually refers to as "conflict of interest" and is the quintessential driving force behind rivalry dynamics. The presence of a contentious issue which is of high salience to enduring rivals is a necessary condition for the enactment and preservation of a rivalry in world

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[5] Diehl, P and G. Goertz (2000), *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, pp. 19–20
[6] Diehl, P. (1998), "Introduction: an overview and some theoretical guidelines," in P. Diehl (ed.), *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries*. Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, p. 5.
[7] Bennett, S. (1997), "Measuring rivalry termination, 1816–1992," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 41:2, pp. 227–254; Hensel, P. (1999), "An evolutionary approach to the study of interstate rivalry," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 17:2, pp.179–206.
[8] Colaresi et. al, *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics*, p. 21.
[9] Thompson, W. (1995), "Principal Rivalries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39:2, pp. 195-223, p. 197.

affairs.[10] A wide variety of issue areas can fall in this category. Vasquez argues that rivalries characterized by a strong territorial dimension have a high propensity towards armed conflict.[11] Rasler and Thompson, however, conclude that major powers are driven less by geography and more by "positional" concerns when escalating in the context of a rivalry.[12] State leaders are concerned about "national status, whether their state's prestige and ranking in the system (or some subsystem) is being threatened, and whether or to what extent they are able to influence events outside their borders short of territorial control."[13] This proposition appears compatible with Realist writings in International Relations citing the distribution of power as being critical to choices over war and peace. Research linking the distribution of power and rivalries has been limited, though at a systemic level, Levy and Ali suggest that the distribution of power did not seem to affect rivalry dynamics between the Netherlands and England.[14]

In any case, issue competition, combined with the requisite element of time, provides the necessary context to the rivalry concept. In essence, therefore, rivals in international politics have antagonistic relations, characterized by a "persistent, fundamental, and long-term incompatibility of goals between two states."[15] A secondary, though equally crucial, component to the temporal dimension is the shared belief that the adversarial relationship will continue to exist in the future.[16]

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[10] Hensel, "An evolutionary approach to the study of interstate rivalry"; Vasquez, J. (1993), *The War Puzzle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[11] Vasquez, "Distinguishing rivals that go to war from those that do not."
[12] Rasler, K. and W. Thompson (2000), "Explaining Rivalry Escalation to War: Space, Position, and Contiguity in the Major Power Subsystem," *International Studies Quarterly*, 44:3, pp. 503–530.
[13] Rasler and Thompson, "Explaining Rivalry Escalation to War," p. 505.
[14] Levy, J. and S. Ali (1998), "From Commercial Competition to Strategic Rivalry to War: The Evolution of the Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, 1609–1652," in P. Diehl (ed.), *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries*, Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, pp. 29–63.
[15] Maoz and Mor, *Bound by Struggle*, p. 2.
[16] Goertz, G. and P. Diehl (1993), "Enduring rivalries: theoretical constructs and empirical patterns," *International Studies Quarterly*, 37:2, p. 154.

An interesting implication of the aforementioned hypotheses is that feelings of hostility are not considered necessary for the identification of a rivalry. Nevertheless, perceptions of another state as a rival due to issue competition should be distinguished from animosity generated by psychological hostility.

Prominent authors would argue that a deep-rooted psychological enmity lies at the core of rivalries.[17] Thompson posits that "….rivals deal with each other in a psychologically charged context of path-dependent hostility."[18] However, scholars have also entertained the notion that rivalries may simply be related to a conflict of interests that lasts for a prolonged period.[19] If this is the case, psychological factors may be unrelated to the observed belligerence of rival dyads. The ambiguous conceptualization of rivals does not end here, with scholars questioning the necessity of mutual perception of rivals as such.

For an external observer, it would be hard to imagine a rivalry between two actors when one of them (or both) do not explicitly see a rival in the face of the other. Thompson's conceptualization of strategic rivalries emphasizes the perceptual element and thus views the mutual identification as rivals as a necessary requirement. He elaborates further on this matter, asserting that state elites and leaderships in particular, irrespective of the general population or other interest groups, need to identify the "other" as a rival.[20]

While Thompson's case appears attractive to those familiar with historical examples of rivalries, a number of scholars offered interesting observations that

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[17] Vasquez, "Distinguishing rivals that go to war from those that do not."; Maoz and Mor, *The Strategic Evolution of Enduring International Rivalries*.
[18] Thompson, W. (2001), "Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics", *International Studies Quarterly*, 45:4, p. 558.
[19] Levy, "The rise and decline of the Anglo-Dutch rivalry," p. 174.
[20] Thompson, "Identifying rivals and rivalries in world politics."

should not go unnoticed. They suggested that competition between rivals may be ongoing at low intensity levels (Franco – German competition for influence in the EU after the German re-unification may be a solid example) and for a long period of time, without the explicit acknowledgement from participant states that they perceive each other in rivalry terms. In other instances, only one member of the dyad may perceive a rival in the form of the other member. Irrespective of these nuances, dyads should at the very least exhibit the fundamental characteristics of rivalries, in terms of a prolonged competition over contentious issue areas.

2.2: The Impact of Rivalries in International Politics

The evolution of rivalry research is indicative of persisting divisions but also of an increasing acceptance of the phenomenon as a distinct framework under which conflict can be studied. In this regard, assessing the impact of militarized crises on rival perceptions signifies an appropriate next step in the effort to understand why and how rivals affect the course of international politics. Scholars have already employed the rivalry concept for diverse purposes and in various approaches. Rivalries have been evaluated as an independent variable. By assessing the impact of rivalry on terrorism, nuclear proliferation and even democracy, researchers sought to ascertain the impact of a phenomenon, which appeared to have a discernible effect on conditions of war and peace.[21]

Moreover, phenomena such as deterrence and arms races have been re-evaluated under conditions of rivalry, further pointing to a statistically observable role of

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[21] Gartzke, E. and D. Jo (2009), "Bargaining, nuclear proliferation, and interstate disputes," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 53:2, pp. 209–233; Conrad, J. (2011), "Interstate rivalry and terrorism: an unprobed link," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* 55:4, pp. 529–555; Rasler, K. and W. Thompson (2011), "Borders, rivalry, democracy, and conflict in the European region, 1816–1994, *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 28:3, pp. 280–303.

rivalry conditions on the dynamics of hostile interactions.[22] For example, a reputation of resolve built in past encounters seems to have a more powerful statistical effect in enduring rivalries.[23] Huth and Russett, moreover, evaluated the possibility of a rival challenging the status quo and initiating a militarized dispute under a general deterrence framework.[24] They concluded that both rational and cognitive factors can have an impact on the onset of crises between rival dyads.

The inner dynamics of rivals have also been heavily scrutinized. How do rivals behave exactly when they are engaged in a rivalry? Two distinct theoretical models have been introduced with a view to accounting for state behavior in a rivalry context. The "punctuated equilibrium" model suggests that hostile behavior in rivalries fluctuates around a specific "lock in" level originating in the initial stages of the rivalry.[25] While relations may temporarily escalate or improve, rivals have no discernible reason to become more conflictual over time.

Reflecting structural Realist principles, this model suggests that only systemic shocks (such as wars or changes in the balance of power) could alter rivalry dynamics.[26] Analyses such as the aforementioned imply that the analytical value of the rivalry phenomenon itself should perhaps be re-evaluated. Indeed, this follows Gartzke and Simon, who argued that rivalries may be epiphenomena, with

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[22] Huth, P. and B. Russett, (1993), "General deterrence between enduring rivals: testing three competing models," *American Political Science Review,* 87:1, pp. 61-73; Gibler D. et. al. (2005), "Taking arms against a sea of troubles: conventional arms races during periods of rivalry, *Journal of Peace Research* 42:2, pp. 131-147.
[23] Huth, P. (1988), *Extended deterrence and the prevention of war*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
[24] According to Huth and Russett: "The analysis of general deterrence differs from immediate deterrence because it focuses on conditions under which military-diplomatic crises may arise, rather than on factors that determine the outcome of a crisis once it has erupted." See Huth and Russett, *General deterrence between enduring rivals*, p. 61.
[25] Diehl, "Introduction," in Diehl, *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries,* p. 7.
[26] Goertz, G. and P. Diehl (1995), "The initiation and termination of enduring rivalries: The impact of political shocks," *American Journal of Political Science*, 39:1, p. 36.

intra-rivalry disputes causally unrelated to one another.[27] In essence, the punctuated equilibrium model suggests that adversarial interactions should not affect the trajectory of a rivalry in any meaningful way.

A dynamic, or "evolutionary" model of rival behavior was suggested, instead, by Hensel, who anticipates rivalrous states to become increasingly violence-prone over time.[28] State behavior should vary systematically over the course of this tense relationship, with "mature" rivalries showing stronger signs of event dependence. The current state of rivalry research allows a degree of certainty in asserting that event dependence is a well-established tenet. Back in 1989, for instance, McGinnis and Williams examined potential interconnections across events in the Cold-War U.S.-U.S.S.R. rivalry, offering valuable insight that could be generalized across rival relationships.[29] They came to the conclusion that "military expenditures and diplomatic hostility of the United States and the Soviet Union form a stable system of interactions" and that this system appeared "very robust to exogenous shocks."[30] Subsequent research indicated that rival interaction is indeed somehow connected to the onset of major wars. Colaresi and Thompson agree with this proposition, suggesting that the conflict-proneness of rivals can only be attributed to a strong event dependence across rivalry disputes.[31]

A final crucial point in enduring rivalries pertains to the role of domestic factors in the onset and evolution of rivalries. Vasquez notes in this regard that domestic

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[27] Gartzke, E. and M. Simon (1999), "Hot Hand: A Critical Analysis of Enduring Rivalries," *Journal of Politics*, 63:3, pp. 777-798.

[28] Hensel, "An Evolutionary Approach to the Study of Interstate Rivalry"; Maoz and Mor, *Bound By Struggle.*

[29] McGinnis, M. and J. Williams (1989), "Change and Stability in Superpower Rivalry," *The American Political Science Review*, 83:4, pp. 1101-1123.

[30] McGinnis and Williams, "Change and Stability in Superpower Rivalry," p. 1118.

[31] Colaresi, M. and W. Thompson (2002), "Hot Spots or Hot Hands: Serial Crises, Escalating Risks, and Strategic Rivalry," *Journal of Politics*, 64:4, pp. 1175-1198.

political processes in Japan were pivotal in the country's expansionist undertakings in Asia and ultimately its confrontational path with the United States.[32] Hensel, on the other hand, suggested that a democratic dyad is less war-prone than a non-democratic pair.[33] Rasler and Thompson, however, posit that democracy matters only outside the rival context, with the rivalry effect outweighing any pacifying effect attributed to democracy.[34]

Finally, endogenous political shocks are cited as another force that may be important towards understanding the dynamics of rivalry evolution. The Anglo-Dutch rivalry was examined by Levy and Ali for the years 1609-1652, who explored the underlying reasons for the transformation of a purely commercial antagonism that went on for half a century to a militarized affair that generated three wars in a short period of time.[35] They suggested that England's domestic instability inhibited the militarization of the rivalry in early years. Earlier, the death of Frederick Henry had led to a détente between another rival dyad, Spain and the Netherlands, creating the necessary conditions for the onset of the Anglo-Dutch rivalry.[36] Domestic factors can thus be considered influential in rivalry initiation, evolution and termination. Overall, research is converging towards the notion that rivalry conditions somehow affect decisions over war and peace. Assessing the impact of tense incidents on perceptions, which are pivotal to critical decisions in foreign policy, is thus a natural progression of rivalry research, building on existing approaches and reflecting current research trends.

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[32] Vasquez, J. (1998), "The Evolution of Multiple Rivalries Prior to the Second World War in the Pacific," in Diehl, *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries,* pp. 191-224.

[33] Hensel, P. (1996), "Charting a course to conflict: territorial issues and interstate conflict, 1816-1992," *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 15:1, pp. 43-73.

[34] Rasler and Thompson, "Borders, rivalry, democracy, and conflict in the European region, 1816–1994."

[35] Levy and Ali, "From Commercial Competition to Strategic Rivalry to War."

[36] Ibid.

Chapter 3:

Perceptions in International Relations

3.1: The Absence of Perceptions from International Relations

There is little doubt that perceptions should be accorded an important role in the study of international politics. This is because decisions, including those related to war and peace, are undertaken by individuals. Indeed, "statesmen, not states, are the primary actors in international affairs."[1] Perceptions are thus not only crucial towards understanding phenomena such as the belligerence of enduring rivals, but have proven to be of prime significance in evaluating a multitude of critical decisions related to international conflict and cooperation. Even scholars committed to the assumption of states as unitary actors acknowledge a role for perceptions. After all, "if power influences international relations, it must do so through the perceptions of those who act on behalf of states."[2] In examining Anthony Eden's decision to initiate the Suez War in 1956, for instance, one must consider his belief that Britain had entered a period of relative decline and needed to act in order to preserve its status in the international system.[3]

Evaluating perceptions is therefore hard to escape. Power, a fundamental concept of International Relations, is itself highly dependent on perceptual factors, as a consensus on its measurement remains elusive. "The corollary of a perceptual

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[1] Zakaria, F. (1998), *From Wealth to Power: The Unusual Origins of America's World Role*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 42.

[2] Holsti, K. (1972), *International Politics: A Framework for Analysis*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 2nd ed., p. 158.

[3] Renshon, J. and S. Renshon (2008), "The Theory and Practice of Foreign Policy Decision Making," *Political Psychology*, 29:4, p. 511.

approach to power is the realization that expectations inform policy."[4] In a similar vein to numerous other concepts, power means different things to different people. There are two dominant traditions in the literature with regards to power assessments. According to Baldwin, the two approaches are "the elements of national power approach, which depicts power as resources, and the relational power approach, which depicts power as an actual or potential relationship."[5]

The main deficiency of the "elements of power" approach, which focuses on relative numbers of resources available, is its inability to capture the extent to which these resources are actually translated to influence in the international arena. In the final analysis, the possession of resources means little to analysts and policy-makers alike, if these resources cannot be deployed to change or otherwise affect state behavior. The "relational power" approach, developed by behavioral political scientists, captures this crucial aspect of power,[6] though the multitude of external and internal, state-level variables affecting its measurement render it contingent to subjective assessments and hence, vulnerable to misperception.

Yet, perceptions remain absent from numerous analyses. Well-established authors assess decision-making processes with an implicit assumption that leaders understand well the core variables of their strategic environment, from the strength of allied commitments to enemy capabilities. This model, articulated in the seminal "Essence of Decision," leaves little room for psychological deficiencies or personal traits affecting the decision-making process.[7] Allison and

[4] Wohlforth, W. (1994), "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security*, 19:3, p. 98.
[5] Baldwin, D. (2002), "Power and International Relations," in W. Carlsnaes et. al (eds.), *Handbook of International Relations*, London: Sage, p. 185.
[6] Lasswell, H. and A. Kaplan (1950), *Power and Society: A Framework for Political Inquiry*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
[7] Allison, G. and P. Zelikow (1999), *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis,* New York, NY: Addison-Wesley, 2nd ed.

Zelikow assume, in their rational actor model, that states are consistent in their pursuit of "national security and national interests" in the face of external threats and opportunities.[8] Friedberg notes that "assessment through rational calculation plays the part of a reliable but invisible transmission belt connecting objective change to adaptive behavior."[9]

Indeed, from Thucydides to Morgenthau and Kenneth Waltz,[10] prominent International Relations scholars have constructed models of international politics based on the premise that decision makers are in a position to accurately perceive parameters such as balances of power, selecting their responses on the basis of a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis.[11] Threats and opportunities emanating from the operational environment are therefore assumed to be perceptible and efficiently incorporated by leaders in their decisions. In many of these works, moreover, an assumption of perfect rationality is implied. This means that decisions are taken to maximize utility based on perfect information concerning all available options and their consequences. War would be a rare phenomenon, if this assumption were true, as actors would be in a position to predict outcomes, while losers would have a strong incentive to bargain in order to avoid conflict.[12]

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[8] Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*.

[9] Friedberg, A. (1988), *The Weary Titan: Britain and the Experience of Relative Decline, 1895-1905*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 13.

[10] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War,* Harmondsworth and Ringwood: Penguin Books, rev. ed., 1972; Morgenthau, H. (1973), *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, NY: Alfred Knopf,; Waltz, K. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

[11] Keohane, R. (1986), "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in R. Keohane (ed.), *Neorealism and Its Critics*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, p. 165.

[12] Fearon, J. (1995), "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, 49:3, pp. 379-414.

3.2: Perceptions Come to the Fore

Empirical evidence indicates that the real world functions quite differently, with accurate perceptions often being elusive in decision-making. This is surprising, considering the capacity of modern states to undertake assessments of enemy capabilities, but it seems that wars attributed to misperception are increasing, rather than decreasing. Using the Correlates of War (COW), Militarized Interstate Dispute (MID), and National Material Capabilities (NMC) databases, Lindley and Schildkraut found that the utility of wars is actually declining over time. Whereas initiators won 55% of the 79 major interstate wars between 1815 and 1991, their success rate has dropped to 33% since 1945.[13] Despite the observed decline of successful war initiations, "states initiate wars at an increasing to steady (since 1920) rate over time."[14] This implies that states miscalculate at an increasing rate, with leaders' misperceptions being the prime suspect for this deficiency.

Rational models, therefore, resort to simplifications that obscure decision-making analysis. This is hardly surprising. While variables such as the actual distribution of power and balances of capabilities assist in understanding broad, long-term historical trends, decisions are reached by individuals based on a set of informed, though ultimately subjective and uncertain, perceptions. Generally, perceptions refer to "the process of apprehending by means of the senses and recognizing and interpreting what is processed."[15] Leaders, like all humans, possess a limited

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[13] Lindley, D. and R. Schildkraut (2005), "Is War Rational? The Extent of Miscalculation and Misperception as Causes of War," available at www3.nd.edu/~dlindley/IWR/IWR%20Article.doc, [accessed 04/01/2015].

[14] Ibid, p. 1.

[15] Stein, J. (2013), "Threat Perception in International Relations," forthcoming in L. Huddy et. al. (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2nd ed., p. 2, available at https://www.surrey.ac.uk/politics/research/researchareasofstaff/isppsummeracademy/instructors%20/Stein%20-%20Threat%20Perception%20in%20International%20Relations.pdf, [accessed 20 June 2013.]

capacity to process information and stimuli (their rationality is bounded).[16] Heuristics and cognitive filters are therefore employed in order to interpret incoming data, make inferences, manage uncertainty and generate threat perceptions.[17] Eden's perceptions of his country's decline were undoubtedly accurate, though it has to be stressed that accurate perceptions do not inescapably lead to appropriate and effective policies. While the salience of perceptions is undeniable, there have been historical instances in which the possession of either accurate or erroneous perceptions simply did not make a difference.

France and Britain, for example, underestimated Hitler's belligerence prior to the outbreak of World War II. Scholars argued, however, that a timely military build-up would have been inconsequential, with studies converging to the notion that the German leader would start a war irrespective of other actors' actions.[18] While counterfactuals are a risky undertaking, Schweller's hypothesis involving Stalin's perception of the distribution of power possesses an equally compelling logic: "it would have been far better for the Soviets to have balanced against, rather than bandwagoned with, Germany. In that case Stalin would have presented Hitler with the prospect of a two-front war, seriously undermining the Fuhrer's strategy and perhaps causing its abandonment. But because he mistakenly perceived Europe as a tripolar, not a bipolar, system with France and Britain as the third pole, Stalin expected a war of attrition in the West."[19]

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[16] Jones, B. (1999), "Bounded Rationality," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 2:1, pp. 297-321.
[17] Stein, "Threat Perception in International Relations," p. 14.
[18] Kershaw, I. (2000), *Hitler 1936-1945: Nemesis*, London: Allen-Lane.
[19] Schweller, R. (1998), "Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest," *World Politics*, 51:1, p. 168.

At the same time, highly inaccurate perceptions can also lead to peaceful outcomes. A government, hypothetically, decides to appease a competitor because it erroneously believes that it has become too powerful to challenge. War can thereby be averted and misperception could actually contribute to the maintenance of peace. It goes without saying, however, that in the long-term, policies based on erroneous perceptions are unlikely to yield optimal outcomes. As Louis Halle, a former U.S. State Department bureaucrat suggests, foreign policies address themselves to "the image of the external world" as it is perceived in the minds of policymakers, an image which may, or may not, reflect real conditions. Halle warns that if "the image is false, actually and philosophically false, no technicians, however proficient, can make the policy that is based on it sound."[20]

The fear that perceptions of policy planners may not adequately capture reality is related to the association of misperceptions with conflict. Wohlforth compared measures of power with actual perceptions in the case of Russia before the advent of World War I.[21] He concluded that the disparity between actual estimators and perceptions was surprisingly extensive.[22] Leaders had grossly and systematically overestimated Russia's power, leading to an unwarranted spiral of enhanced threat perceptions and escalation. While it is debatable whether an accurate depiction of Russian power would lead to peace in Europe, the pervasive misperceptions in the run up to the outbreak of the Great War acted as a catalyst towards escalation. Indeed, if Michael Howard is correct to suggest that the origins of most wars can be traced in "perceptions by statesmen of the growth of hostile power and the fears

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[20] Halle, L. (1960), *American Foreign Policy,* London: Allen and Unwin*,* p. 318.
[21] Wohlforth, W. (1987), "The Perception of Power: Russia in the Pre-1914 Balance," *World Politics* 34:3, pp. 353–381.
[22] Ibid, p. 354.

for the restriction, if not the extinction, of their own,"[23] then the importance of perceptions becomes apparent, particularly in historical instances of increased uncertainty, as in the case of power transitions and shifting alliances.

3.3: The Evolution of Cognitive Research in International Relations

After the end of the Second World War, in an effort to shed light on this previously underappreciated factor and its impact on international politics, perceptions became the object of scrutiny by International Relations scholars. The study of perceptions, however, is only part of the wider "psychological" literature in international politics, which originated in the interwar period. Indeed, the cognitive literature can be traced as far back as the 1930s, when most contributions in the field came from social psychologists, rather than political scientists. Jack Levy reminds us that "following Freud's emphasis on aggressive instincts as the root cause of war, (Einstein and Freud, 1932), there was considerable interest in applying psychoanalytic perspectives to the study of war (Durbin and Bowlby, 1939)."[24] As a result, a number of psychological treatises investigated "nationalist" and "aggressive" attitudes, without delving deeper into the policy-relevant aspects of these societal-level traits. This shortcoming can potentially explain the relatively weak impact these initial efforts had on mainstream studies of war and peace.[25]

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[23] Howard, M. (1983), *The Causes of Wars,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, p. 18.
[24] Levy, J. (2003), "Political Psychology and Foreign Policy," in D. Sears et. al., (eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, p. 256.
[25] Einstein, A. and S. Freud (1932), *Why War?*, Paris: International Institute of Intellectual Cooperation; Droba, D. (1931), "Effect of various factors on militarism-pacifism," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 26:2, pp. 141-153; Stagner, R. (1942), "Some factors related to attitudes toward war, 1938", *Journal of Social Psychology*, 16:1, pp. 131-142.

This is not to suggest that these forays in the political manifestations of the psyche were unhelpful. Alexander and Juliette George, for example, provided a highly detailed narrative in their quest to explain Woodrow Wilson's self-defeating leadership style.[26] Wilson's non-rational personality characteristics, of which he was deeply unaware, were skilfully depicted and were shown to have allegedly played an important role in the defeat of the Treaty of Versailles.[27] Lasswell's "compensation" theory from the late 1940s was employed as a point of departure.[28] Wilson's struggle to compensate for his problematic self-esteem during childhood had led to the creation of an excessively uncompromising mindset which was activated in critical political battles with adverse results.

George and George presented a compelling case, suggesting that Wilson's unconscious battle against the memory of his overbearing father could actually have had an impact on world affairs.[29] Similar psycho-biographical works were characterized by great detail and were ground-breaking for their time. However, their main weakness was that they could not generate widely applicable (and testable) theoretical propositions. In any case, they were successful in shifting the attention of political scientists to the workings of decision-makers' minds. Maybe in part thanks to the stimulus provided by these efforts, the emancipation of cognitive psychology, with concepts and methods tailored to a policy-making context, would soon follow to firmly establish the political psychology discipline.

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[26] George, A. and J. George (1956), *Woodrow Wilson and Colonel House: A Personality Study*, New York, NY: John Day.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Lasswell, H. (1948), *Power and Personality*, New York, NY: Norton.
[29] Stein, J. (1994), "An Agenda for Political Psychology: Alexander George as Architect, Engineer and Community-Builder," Political Psychology, 15:1, p. 3.

The subsequent "cognitive revolution" in political psychology brought a voluminous literature on decision making which directly addressed outcomes in foreign policy by examining the motives, preferences and values of policy makers. A crucial assumption of these contributions was the complexity of cognitive and affective processes which construct images and ideas. No predictions could be made about how the material world is perceived in the ideational world, with scholars encouraged to ascertain empirically how individuals perceive a situation, process stimuli and reach decisions.[30] Gradually, more focused concepts such as "belief systems," "images" and "perceptions" were incorporated in various analytical frameworks and applied to a diverse set of case-studies.[31]

The proliferation of cognitive psychological studies affected political science in a profound manner. It emphasized that individuals systematically deviate from the abstract rational model they purportedly follow. An inner need to simplify reality, avoid dissonance and tackle uncertainty, "forces" decision-makers to employ mechanisms such as the processes of estimation and attribution which undermine their capacity to make rational choices, at least in an absolute sense.[32] By shedding light on "the structures and processes within the individual's mind that are said to play the major role in behaviour,"[33] these undertakings offered valuable insight. For instance, the concepts of cognitive closure and consistency provided a

[30] Simon, H. (1985), "Human Nature in Politics: The Dialogue of Psychology with Political Science," *American Political Science Review,* 79:2, pp. 293-304.

[31] George, A. (1969), "The "Operational Code": A neglected approach to the study of political leaders and decision-making," *International Studies Quarterly*, 13:2, pp. 190-222; De Rivera, J. (1968), *The psychological dimension of foreign policy*, Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill; Holsti, *International Politics*; Snyder, R. et. al, (eds.) (1962), *Foreign policy decision-making: An approach to the study of international politics*, Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

[32] Dawes, R. (1998), "Judgment and choice," in D. Gilbert et. al. (eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology*, New York: McGraw Hill, 4th ed., pp. 497-548; Kahneman, D. et. al. (eds.) (1982), *Judgement under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[33] Sampson, E. (1981), "Cognitive Psychology as Ideology," American Psychologist, 36:7, p. 730.

plausible explanation in occasions where leaders insisted in supporting prior assessments in the face of contradicting evidence before,[34] and even after, their predictions had proven to be erroneous.[35]

Before analyzing the concept of perception, it would be useful to mention the role of images and beliefs in shaping perceptions. Initially, these concepts were not analytically distinguished, but as research progressed in political psychology, the concepts of perception and misperception were analytically decoupled from the more generic concepts of beliefs and images. There is a strong relationship between the latter. A "belief system" entails a "system of empirical and normative ideas about reality. The "belief system" concept thus denotes the complete world view, whereas "image" as used here refers to a part of this totality."[36]

In international politics, according to Boulding, the image of the "other" depends on two factors: 1) whether the country in question is an ally or an enemy (perceived threats and opportunities respectively and 2) the capabilities of the actor in question.[37] Hermann et. al. built on the psychological concept of schema[38] and suggested that the aforementioned factors are not unrelated to the cultural dimension, but interact in meaningful ways, creating images that are drawn upon

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[34] Anderson, C. et al. (1980), "Perseverance of social theories: The role of explanation in the persistence of discredited information," *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 39:6, pp. 1037-1049.

[35] Tetlock, P. (1998), "Social Psychology and World Politics," in Gilbert et. al., *Handbook of Social Psychology*, pp. 868-912.

[36] Brodin, K. (1972), "Belief Systems, Doctrines, and Foreign Policy: A presentation of two alternative models for the analysis of foreign policy decision-making," *Cooperation and Conflict,* 7:1, p. 97.

[37] Boulding, K. (1969), "National Images and International Systems," in J. Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, New York: Free Press, revised ed., pp. 422-431.

[38] The "schema" concept is widely used in cognitive psychology and it refers to a "an abstract or generic knowledge structure, stored in memory, that specifies the defining features and relevant attributes of some stimulus domain, and the interrelations among those attributes…Social schemas may be representations of types of people, social roles, or events." See Crocker, J. et. al. (1984), "Schematic Bases of Belief Change," in J. Eiser, (ed.), *Attitudinal Judgement*, New York: Springer-Verlag, p. 197.

each time the perceiver seeks to interpret an action undertaken by another actor.[39] The implication is that images provide cognitive structures describing sequences of events to individuals upholding them, irrespective of whether enough evidence exists to invoke the specific image.

Scholars have demonstrated the potential impact of images on threat perception. The effects of "diabolical enemy images, "moral self-images," and even "the image of the adversary's image of oneself" have been the object of scrutiny by scholars such as Ralph White and Richard Lebow, who suggested that images affect leadership estimates of enemy intentions. Moreover, images affect calculations regarding potential repercussions of leaders' own actions.[40] Analyses of images across case studies indicates that they indeed affect outcomes in international politics and can affect decisively developments in critical events. Levy and Thompson provide a telling example during the Cuban Missile Crisis:

"Kennedy believed that the sequencing of coercive and conciliatory behavior was critical in achieving his objectives. While Kennedy was quite willing to be conciliatory toward Khrushchev, the president also believed that it was essential to begin with coercive threats and actions at the onset of the crisis, in order to demonstrate his own credibility and reverse any image of weakness in the mind of the adversary – images that Kennedy believed, correctly, that Khrushchev had taken away from their June 1991 summit meeting in Vienna."[41]

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[39] Herrmann, R. et. al. (1997), "Images in International Relations: An Experimental Test of Cognitive Schemata," *International Studies Quarterly*, 41:3, p. 408.
[40] White, R. (1970), *Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars*, Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books; Lebow, R. (1981), *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis,* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press.

[41] Levy, J. and W. Thompson (2010), *Causes of War*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 140.

The manner in which images affect beliefs is far from straightforward. During the Cold War, a number of scholars supported the notion that hostile images of the Soviet Union had a profound impact on American foreign policy beliefs, whether related to the USSR or not.[42] Murray and Cowden focused on American elite belief change between 1988 and 1992 and found that after particular events, leaders were capable of updating their "images" of the USSR in specific domains, such as the strategy of containment and the stationing of U.S. troops in Europe. Nevertheless, wider beliefs about how the U.S. should conduct itself in international affairs were far more rigid, remaining largely unaffected.[43]

Nevertheless, beliefs play an important role in the formation of perceptions about how the world works more generally and about conflictual interactions with the enemy, more specifically. This is because the perception of threats depends both on the actual conditions of the situation and the pre-existing beliefs of the decision maker(s).[44] Beliefs have been employed in various approaches, with the "operational code" literature standing as the most influential. In George's reformulation of Leites' "operational code" concept,[45] a set of "master beliefs" establishes a framework through which leaders make sense of the political world.[46] These are philosophical beliefs on the nature of conflict and politics, as well as instrumental beliefs regarding the effectiveness of alternative strategies towards achieving one's goals. In essence, the "operational code" paradigm tries

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[42] Hurwitz, J. and M. Peffley (1987), "How Are Foreign Policy Attitudes Structured? A Hierarchical Model," *American Political Science Review,* 81:4, pp. 1099-1120; Hurwitz, J. and M. Peffley (1990), "Public Images of the Soviet Union: The Impact on Foreign Policy Attitudes," *Journal of Politics*, 52:1 pp. 3-28.
[43] Murray, S. and J. Cowden (1999), "The Role of "Enemy Images" and Ideology in Elite Belief Systems," *International Studies Quarterly*, 43:3, pp. 455-481.
[44] Jervis, R. (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
[45] Leites, N. (1951), *The Operational Code of the Politburo*, New York: McGraw Hill.
[46] George, "The Operational Code.""

to isolate the most politically relevant elements of a leader's "cognitive map" and derive a set of beliefs about politics. George's article generated substantial interest in the academic community, with a large number of subsequent efforts attempting to identify the "operational codes" of various leaders.[47]

Overall, the transposition of psychological concepts from the individual level to a policy making context was not without its problems. Notable scholars emphasized from an early point the shortcomings of these narratives. Alexander George, for instance, cautioned in applying the Operational Code paradigm[48] in the study of international politics by asserting that "such a belief system influences, but does not unilaterally determine, decision-making; it is an important, but not the only variable that shapes decision-making behaviour."[49] Other scholars had also warned against a transposition of individual cognitive models to the interstate level. Katarina Brodin, for instance suggested that "the hypotheses generated by this type of model are of little interest, if the objective is trying to explain the action of states in foreign policy and testing them empirically."[50]

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[47] Indicatively: Selim, M. (1979), "The Operational Code Belief System and Foreign Policy Decision-Making: The Case of Gamal Abdel Nasser," PhD Dissertation, Carleton University; Walker, S. (1977), "The Interface Between Beliefs and Behavior: Henry Kissinger's Operational Code and the Vietnam War," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 21:1, pp. 129-168; McLellan, D. (1971), "The Operational code approach to the study of political leaders: Dean Acheson's philosophical and instrumental beliefs," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 4:1, pp. 52-75.

[48] The operational code concept can be defined as "a political leader's beliefs about the nature of politics and political conflict, his views regarding the extent to which historical developments can be shaped, and his notions of correct strategies and tactics" (George, "The "Operational Code"", p. 197.)

[49] George, "The "Operational Code"", p. 191.

[50] Brodin, "Belief Systems, Doctrines, and Foreign Policy," p. 100.

3.4: Towards Conceptualizing Perceptions

Moving on to the concepts of perception and misperception, a crucial question concerns the distinctive types of perceptions that should matter to analysts of international politics. According to Levy: "Misperceptions are commonplace; but little attention has been given to the question of what kinds of misperceptions are most likely to lead to war, and to the specific theoretical linkages through which they operate."[51] The answer appears to be straightforward: when it comes to choices of war and peace, perceptions regarding the threat posed by another actor should be central to analyses. For Thucydides and many of his followers in the discipline, power (and military power in particular) was used as a measure of threat. Thus, according to Thucydides, who dedicated a substantial portion of his work assessing the relative military power of the two rivals, the rise of Athenian maritime prowess was considered to be an adequate threat indicator for Spartan generals. Spartans are shown to contemplate on the relative power trend, which clearly favoured Athens, and responded accordingly, by launching a pre-emptive strike before the relative gap became prohibitive to aspiring challengers:

"To the question why they broke the treaty, I answer by placing first an account of their grounds of complaint and points of difference, that no one may ever have to ask the immediate cause which plunged the Hellenes into a war of such magnitude. The real cause I consider to be the one which was formally most kept out of sight. The growth of the power of Athens, and the alarm which this inspired in Lacedaemon, made war inevitable."[52]

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[51] Levy, J. (1983), "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems," *World Politics*, 36:1, p. 78.

[52] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, (Book I, ch. 23).

John Mearsheimer and the school of offensive realism insist that power alone should still define threat perceptions, as intentions can never be assessed with absolute certainty.[53] While power and capabilities remain a pre-eminent yardstick in threat assessments, contemporary literature accords intentions an equally important role in defining threat perceptions. Scholars such as Stephen Walt present a convincing argument when they suggest that intentions are central to threat perceptions and can greatly affect decisions over war and peace.[54] Perceptions of third party intentions have also affected outcomes in international politics. Saddam Hussein was surprised to see the United States intervene after he annexed Kuwait in 1990 and was equally shocked by the opposition of other Arab states participating in the U.S. led coalition against Iraq.[55]

An entire series of contributions analyzing concepts such as "deterrence" and "signaling" was borne out of a well-anchored understanding that perceptions of intentions, whether accurate or unfounded, are paramount in assessing threats in world politics.[56] The same studies, however, established the difficulty of communicating (and therefore perceiving) intentions in an environment of pervasive uncertainty. "Deterrence theorists tend to ignore difficulties that might be associated with the actual signalling process…Everyone is thought to understand, so to speak, the meaning of fierce guard dogs, barbed wire and 'No Trespassing' signs. In practice, however, this may not be so."[57]

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[53] Mearscheimer, J. (2001), *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: Norton, p. 31.
[54] Walt, S. (1985), "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power," *International Security*, 9:4, pp. 3-43.
[55] Freedman, L. and E. Karsh (1995), *The Gulf Conflict, 1990-1991*: *Diplomacy and War in the New World Order*, Princeton and London: Princeton University Press and Faber.
[56] Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War."; Schelling, T. (1966), *Arms and Influence*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
[57] Lebow, R. (1985), "Conclusions," in R. Jervis et. al. (eds.), *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, p. 205.

Despite the methodological difficulties, it is certain that there is no turning back with regards to the incorporation of perceptions in I.R. paradigms. Recently, perceptions were accorded a prominent position in Realist works, traditionally reluctant to delve into the "black box" of the state. The impact of power on foreign policy is now considered more complex than previously thought, because "systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level,"[58] suggesting specifically, that it is leaders' perceptions of relative power that affect policy-making, not "simply relative quantities of physical resources or forces in being."[59] Zakaria noted that U.S. "statesmen's perceptions of national power shift[ed] suddenly, rather than incrementally, and [were] shaped more by crises and galvanizing events like wars than by statistical measures."[60]

In extreme cases, perceptual shocks render statesmen aware of cumulative effects of long-term power trends, forcing them to adapt to all new circumstances.[61] Similarly, Christensen described how Britain's collapse in 1947 forced the Truman administration to recognize the bipolar distribution of power and brought about the active containment of the Soviet Union.[62] Thus, perceptions have now been accorded a central place in the literature, even though the specific mechanisms through which perceptions affect outcomes remain underspecified.

On a final note, it is worth considering whether these developments actually contradict mainstream theories. At first glance, paradigms such as Realism would appear to be less than compatible with psychological narratives of international

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[58] Rose, G. (1998), "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, 51:1, p. 146.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power*, p. 11.
[61] Zakaria, *From Wealth to Power.*
[62] Christensen, T., (1996), "Moderate Strategies and Crusading Rhetoric: Truman Mobilizes for a Bipolar World" in T. Christensen, *Useful Adversaries: Grand Strategy, Domestic Mobilization, and Sino-American Conflict, 1947-1958*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

politics. Upon closer inspection, however, an observer can discern the necessary "space" for the inclusion of perceptual factors related to decision-making. Even though he chose not to delve into psychological variables, Morgenthau declared that "our civilization assumes that the social world is susceptible to rational control conceived after the model of the natural sciences, while the experiences, domestic and international, of the age contradict this assumption.[63] At another point he conceded that "the true nature of the policy is concealed by ideological justifications and rationalizations. The deeper the individual is involved in the power struggle, the less likely he is to see the power struggle for what it is."[64]

Classical Realist prescriptions for prudence indicated that the school of thought did not consider international politics to be characterized by universal rationality. Early studies of the "security dilemma," a core concept in International Relations, suggested in even clearer terms that interaction between actors at the international level could be marred by pervasive irrationalities.[65] More recently, Waltz, responding to Keohane's view that rationality is one of the key assumptions in the Realist research program, asserted that political leaders cannot be assumed to make "the nicely calculated decisions that the word 'rationality' suggests."[66] Perceptions, therefore fill a carefully carved niche, located between systemic variables and actual foreign policy outcomes.

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[63] Morgenthau, H. (1946), *Scientific Man Versus Power Politics*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, p. 71.

[64] Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations*, p. 88.

[65] Herz, J. (1951), *Political Realism and Political Idealism: A Study in Theories and Realities,* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

[66] Waltz, K. (1986), "Reflections on Theory of International Politics: A Response to My Critics," in R. Keohane (ed.), Neorealism and Its Critics, pp. 322–345, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, p. 331.

Chapter 4:

Crises, Perceptions and War

4.1: Crises and Misperception in International Politics

Wars rarely arise out of the blue. They usually constitute the "final episode" in a process that begins with a conflict of interest, leading to disputes, crises and finally escalates to armed conflict.[1] According to Vasquez, wars "do not break out unless there has been a long history of conflict and hostility between disputants."[2] The underlying hypothesis is that suspicion and threat perceptions are enhanced due to crises. Bolstered by the increasing influence of hardliners domestically, conditions become ripe for the onset of hostilities. Crises, therefore, constitute instances where psychological variables cannot be ignored. Holsti suggested that cognitive approaches would be most useful when employed in situations characterized by stress, complex, ambiguous, or unanticipated circumstances, as well as for decisions made by individuals at the top of the bureaucratic pyramid.[3] If one or more of these conditions are met, decisions are likely to be heavily affected by the "cognitive maps," the set of psychological predispositions of individuals.[4]

Whereas what states do before the crisis is crucial towards understanding why crises occur, the actions of states during a crisis determine whether the incident actually escalates to open warfare.[5] Possessing accurate perceptions, therefore,

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[1] Bremer, S. and T. Cusack, *The Process of War*, Amsterdam: Gordon and Breach, 1995.
[2] Vasquez, J. (1993), *The War Puzzle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 75.
[3] Holsti, O. (2006), "Cognitive Process Approaches to Decision-Making," in *Making American Foreign Policy,* New York: Routledge, pp. 33-54.
[4] Ibid.
[5] Fearon, J. (1994), "Signaling versus the balance of power and interests," Journal of Conflict Resolution 38:2, pp. 236- 269.

during a tense crisis can be paramount towards avoiding unwanted hostilities. This is easier said than done, however, considering the intrinsic characteristics of interstate crises. Political scientists have not reached an agreement on the definition of crises, but Lebow suggested three operational criteria for identifying crisis episodes, which appear to be satisfied across the majority of case studies in the relevant literature:[6]

1) Policy-makers perceive that the action or threatened action of another international actor seriously impairs concrete national interests, the country's bargaining reputation, or their own ability to remain in power.

2) Policy-makers perceive that any actions on their part designed to counter this threat (capitulation aside) will raise a significant prospect of war.

3) Policy-makers perceive themselves to be acting under time constraints.

Scholars are understandably pessimistic with regards to crises and the potential for rational thinking that could lead to de-escalation. This is due to the impact of stress, a fundamental characteristic of crises, on decision-making. Conditions of stress "increase cognitive rigidity, reduce the ability to make subtle distinctions, reduce creativity, and increase the selective filtering of information. Stress leads to a reduction in the number of alternative options that people consider. It also affects search, and results in the dominance of search activity by predispositions, prior images, and historical analogies rather than by a more balanced assessment of the evidence."[7] Empirically, supporting evidence has been provided by scholars, who suggest that successive crises between antagonistic states

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[6] Lebow, R. (1981), *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 10-12.
[7] Levy, J. and W. Thompson (2010), Causes of War, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 156.

"significantly increase international tension and expectation of war."[8] Analysts are justified therefore, to fear that crises can increase the probability for escalation and war.

While research on stress and cognition has predominantly focused on the adverse effects of anxiety on learning, challenging conditions have also been shown to promote deep learning under certain conditions.[9] An important caveat here is that optimal cognitive performance depends on the existence of an intermediate level of "arousal" (stress). Small levels of emotional intensity have little or no effect on the mental state of decision-makers, while excessive levels of stress have the opposite effect, compromising physical and mental self-control.[10] This assumption lies at the core of the Yerkes-Dodson law, which stipulates that the relationship between arousal and performance resembles a bell-shaped curve.[11] Yerkes and Dodson calculated the rate at which mice learned to navigate a maze, observing that "learning" became optimal at levels of moderate stimulation. When stress induced exceeded a certain point, the capacity of mice to "learn" was impaired. Although psychologists still disagree on the correct specification of the Yerkes-Dodson law, the relationship has been subjected to multiple tests which verified its validity. A substantial number of these tests involved human beings.[12]

[8] Lebow, *Between Peace and War,* p. 317.
[9] Mortlock, C. (1984), *The Adventure Alternative*, Milnthorpe: Cicerone Press; Priest, S. and M.A. Gass (2005), *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming*, Urbana Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2nd ed.
[10] Buck, R. (1988), *Human Motivation and Emotion*, New York, NY: Wiley, 2nd ed.; Yates, J.F. (1990), *Judgement and Decision Making*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
[11] Yerkes, R. and J. Dodson (1908), "The relation of strength of stimulus to rapidity of habit-formation," *Journal of Comparative Neurology and Psychology*, 18:5, pp. 459-482.
[12] Field, T. et al. (1985), *Stress and Coping*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Ashcraft, H. and M. Faust (1994), "Mathematics anxiety and mental arithmetic performance: an exploratory investigation," *Cognition and Emotion*, 8:2, pp. 97-125.

Indeed, this is one of the few relationships in psychology that have been accorded with the status of "law".[13] The arousal-performance relationship elaborated by the Yerkes-Dodson law is attributed by psychologists to the availability and limit of cognitive resources devoted to the task at hand.[14] In short, low levels of arousal are associated with short attention spans, the persistence of biases and other barriers to optimal decision-making. In other words, individuals do not commit their cognitive processing mechanisms to gathering and properly processing all relevant information. Crucial details may thus be omitted and decisions may be reached based on pre-existing perceptions (which may or may not be relevant to the current situation). The capacity for problem-solving is improved when stress levels increase, as the individual intensifies the effort to gather and process information. Excessive levels, however, of stress have been shown to impair brain function, by posing an adverse effect on the decision-maker's capacity to organize inferential thought processes, evaluate the relative merits of potential outcomes, and generally undertake a rational cost-benefit analysis.[15] Extreme levels of stress may even lead to aggression or complete paralysis.[16]

Early case study research indicated that stressful situations in international politics were characterized by severe misperceptions. Military historians, in particular, were the first to investigate misperception during crises and conflicts. Confronted with the recurrent inability of governments to respond effectively to warnings of an impending attack, scholars examined such instances as the Japanese attack on

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[13] Kaufman, B. (1999), "Emotional arousal as a source of bounded rationality*," Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 38:2, p. 137.

[14] Eysenck, M. (1982), *Attention and Arousal: Cognition and Performance*, New York, NY: Springer; Forgas, J. (1995), "Mood and judgement: the affect infusion model (AIM)," *Psychological Bulletin*, 117:1, pp. 39-66.

[15] Goleman, D. (2004), *Emotional Intelligence & Working with Emotional Intelligence*, London: Bloomsbury; Eysenck, *Attention and Arousal.*

[16] Levitt, E. (1980), *The Psychology of Anxiety,* Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2nd ed.

Pearl Harbor and the outbreak of the Korean War to produce a voluminous empirical literature on intelligence failures.[17] The ensuing literature on strategic surprise produced numerous insights on the intensity and impact of misperception during crises. In 1962, an inquiry appeared which sought to employ certain cognitive concepts in an effort to provide a comprehensive understanding of strategic surprise. Roberta Wohlstetter's "Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision" focused on a single historical event.[18] The core tenet was that the Pearl Harbor surprise occurred not because intelligence was absent, but because signals, although received, had been either ignored or erroneously interpreted. [19]

Wohlstetter's work raised the level of discussion beyond the role of actors and agency, emphasizing the perceptual bases of decision making. More specifically, Wohlstetter tackled the psychological notion that decision makers operate within the context of predispositions that effectively function as a screen through which information is filtered.[20] Policy makers, eager to fit new data into their pre-existing convictions, were adamant that a Japanese attack on American soil was unlikely as long as the United States maintained overall military superiority vis-à-vis Japan.[21]

Crises, by definition, are decision-making environments which should be even more vulnerable to cognitive deficits.[22] As a result, "ambiguous or even discrepant information is ignored, misperceived, or reinterpreted so that it

[17] Whaley, B. (1973), *Codeword Barbarossa*, Cambridge: MIT Press; Handel, M. (1977), "The Yom Kippur War and the Inevitability of Surprise", *International Studies Quarterly*, 21:3, pp. 461-502; Betts, R. (1978), "Analysis, War, and Decision; Why Intelligence Failures Are Inevitable," *World Politics*, 31:1, pp. 61-89.
[18] Wohlstetter, R. (1962), *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision*, *Stanford*, CA: Stanford University Press.
[19] Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor,* p. 397.
[20] Wohlstetter, R. (1965), "Cuba and Pearl Harbor: Hindsight and Foresight," *Foreign Affairs,* 43:4, p. 699.
[21] Ben-Zvi, A. (1987), *The Illusion of Deterrence: The Roosevelt Presidency and the Origins of the Pacific War*, Boulder, CO and London: Westview Press.
[22] Lebow, *Between peace and war.*

does minimum damage to what the person already believes."[23] In 1940, British military planners were so certain that Germany would not challenge their naval superiority, that they ignored the information, coming from German soldiers themselves, that they were on their way to attack Norway.[24] While the intelligence failure literature dealt with a specific form of misperception, the inability to detect the imminence of hostilities, a body of research on "non-rational" perspectives on security was born and had acknowledged, for the first time, a key role for (mis)perception in crises.[25]

Lebow made an important distinction between motivated and unmotivated sources of misperception.[26] Unmotivated (or cognitive) biases refer to the influence of an individual's predispositions, independent of interests or emotional influences. Motivated biases, on the other hand, are generated by fears or desires and aim at maintaining self-esteem or advancing one's goals. In critical instances, motivated biases constitute defensive mechanisms against risk and danger.[27] Motivated biases are clearly identifiable in interstate deterrence crises, for example. Confronted with pressing situations and acute dilemmas, policy-makers "force" themselves to regard their goals as attainable. As a result, they dismiss threat assessments and signals that contradict their miscalculations.

In "Psychology and Deterrence," Lebow attributes the onset of the Falklands War to "perceptual distortion" by both Argentina and the United Kingdom, concluding

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[23] Jervis, R. (1982), "Deterrence and Perception," *International Security*, 7:3, p. 24.

[24] Jervis, R. (2006), "Understanding Beliefs," *Political Psychology*, 27:5, p. 651.

[25] Allison, G. and P. Zelikow (1999), *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis,* New York, NY: Addison-Wesley, 2nd ed.; Hermann, C. (ed.) (1972), *International Crises,* New York: Free Press; Janis, I. and L. Mann (1977), *Decision Making*, New York: Free Press; Lebow, *Between Peace and War*; Holsti, O. (1972), *Crisis, Escalation, War*, Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press.

[26] Lebow, *Between Peace and War.*

[27] Janis, and Mann, *Decision Making*.

that denial, selective attention and other cognitive shortcomings seem to be pervasive in critical instances, rendering rational deterrence an illusion.[28] Various other treatises explored misperceptions in connection to the outbreak of major wars. Robert North, Ole Holsti and others, showcased that before the outbreak of the First World War, perceptions of hostile intentions were exaggerated by all sides.[29] George and Smoke's study of deterrence in American foreign policy indicated the pervasive difficulties in transmitting and interpreting signals during security crises, some of which arise from cognitive contexts created by cultural barriers.[30]

Capabilities are equally vulnerable to misperception as they can only be accurately ascertained in the battlefield.[31] Characteristics such as the quality of control and communications systems, morale and the ability to integrate effectively new weapon systems are particularly hard to assess outside the battlefield. The consequences can be grave. Blainey and Stoessinger identified military overconfidence deriving from the underestimation of the adversary's capabilities or over-estimation of one's own capabilities as a plausible cause of war.[32] Before the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, for example, the Israelis downplayed the capacity of Egypt to successfully undertake offensive operations, by assuming that Egyptians would not resort to war unless they had attained air

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[28] Lebow, R. (1985), "Miscalculation in the South Atlantic: The Origins of the Falklands War," in R. Jervis et. al., *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 89-124; Lebow, R. (1985), "The Deterrence Deadlock: Is there a Way Out?," ibid, pp. 180-202.

[29] Holsti, O. (1985), "The 1914 Case," *American Political Science Review*, 59:2, pp. 365-378; Zinnes, D. et. al. (1961), "Capability, Threat and the Outbreak of War," in J. Rosenau (ed.), *International Politics and Foreign Policy*, Glencoe: Free Press, pp. 469-482.

[30] George, A. and R. Smoke (1974), *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, New York: Columbia University Press.

[31] Clausewitz, C., *On War,* ed. by A. Rapoport, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1968; Sun Tsu, *The Art of War,* trans. by S. Griffith, New York: Oxford University Press, 1963.

[32] Blainey, G. (1973), *The Causes of War*, New York: Free Press; Stoessinger, J. (1974), *Why Nations Go to War,* New York: St. Martin's Press, 2nd ed.

superiority, or the capacity to support military operations on the ground with their air-force.[33] Anwar Sadat, however, planned around the Israeli deterrent and undertook a limited ground strike along the Suez Canal, which was initially successful. The existence of one type of misperception does not preclude the existence of another. In the last case mentioned, one has to note that the Israelis failed to evaluate the Egyptian motivation to change the status quo, which Egyptian leaders considered unacceptable.[34]

Interestingly, misperception of one's own capabilities may lead to calculations that not only fail in predicting the likely outcome of war, but also grossly underestimate its cost in economic terms. David Lake investigated U.S. and Iraqi attitudes before the 2003 Iraq war and concluded that both countries failed to update prior beliefs regarding intentions and capabilities of the other. Even more surprisingly, considering the quality and extent of resources available to American planners, "misrepresentation by the other side was far less of a problem than self-delusion."[35] Saddam's overconfidence in the capacity of his army to resist an American incursion was apparently matched by systematically baseless estimates in Washington about the military and economic resources necessary to attain victory.

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[33] Ben-Zvi, A. (1990), "Intention, Capability and Surprise: A Comparative Analysis," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 13:1, p. 23.

[34] Stein, J. (1985), "Calculation, Miscalculation and Conventional Deterrence I: The View from Cairo," in R. Jervis et. al., *Psychology and Deterrence*, pp. 34-59.

[35] Lake, D. (2011), "Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War," *International Security*, 35:3, p. 45.

4.2: Towards a Systematic Study of Misperception in Crises

A shortcoming of the majority of forays exploring misperception in crises was that the narrative sought to explain outcomes in terms of the particular conditions of the case study under scrutiny. The need to integrate case studies into a broader theoretical framework would be satisfied by Robert Jervis, with his systematic study of the relationship between psychological variables and security policy-making. Jervis's departure signals the birth of a truly "political" psychology, taking into account the causal dimension of the political environment in which decisions are reached. In 1968, Jervis wrote an article under the title "Hypotheses on Misperception" which stressed the possibility that conflict can arise not only due to "greed" and aggression, which are of course existent in international politics, but because of a tragic turn of events, brought about by states that undermine their own security in their quest to enhance it.[36] This is because leaders may see what they expect, or fear, to see when another actor takes an initiative aiming at solidifying the status quo, leading to misperception of other actors' actions and intentions.

Jervis's effort reached a climax with his seminal book, "Perception and Misperception in International Politics," in which he reiterates what has been known to psychologists all along: cognitive "filters" of information are not only endemic to international politics but also common in our daily lives. In a nutshell, Jervis suggested that misperception can have substantial explanatory power in decisions over war and peace.[37] This is possible because leaders may be wedded

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[36] Jervis, R. (1968), "Hypotheses on Misperceptions", *World Politics*, 20:3, pp. 454–479.
[37] Jervis, R. (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

to their established views and thus oblivious to new information, which is either neglected or wrongly interpreted.[38] Jervis's influential contribution was among the first of many analyses that theorized on the importance of misperceptions, offering insight into the relationship between cognitive factors and policy-making.[39]

However, Jervis's work reoriented the concept of misperceptions to fit a policy-making context. Unlike the majority of cognitive contributions that downplayed the importance of external conditions, (the strategic circumstances in which decisions are reached), Jervis did not posit a causal role for either idiosyncratic characteristics or "ideas," a departure which places his work firmly within the International Relations discipline. Cognitive psychologists, on the other hand, posit that psychological variables possess a causal status.[40] In this regard, Jervis managed to "demystify" cognitive processes. In fact, he notes, "the world is so complex and our information processes so limited that in significant measure people must be theory [belief] driven."[41] Analogies, cognitive shortcuts and past experiences may well be employed to make sense of reality, particularly when uncertainty is pervasive. However, these psychological mechanisms remain a "transmission belt," a mediating factor between structural conditions and decision-making.

While Jervis was not the first author to qualify the applicability of psychology to the study of international politics, he was the first to offer a comprehensive

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[38] Ibid, p. 459.
[39] Ben-Zvi, A., (1990), "Between Warning and Response: The Case of the Yom Kippur War," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 4:2, pp. 227-242; Lebow, *Between Peace and War,* pp. 242-247; Blainey, *The Causes of War*; White, R. (1970), *Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars*, Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books.
[40] Hyland, M. (1981), *Introduction to Theoretical Psychology*, London: Macmillan.
[41] Jervis, "Understanding Beliefs," p. 650.

framework for assessing the impact of cognitive shortcomings in international politics. In his most-cited article, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma" Jervis proceeded to exemplify this potential, when he suggested that the possession of nuclear weapons and an easily observable division between offensive and defensive weaponry can lead to an increased degree of certainty and the elimination of the "security dilemma." It is no coincidence that a theoretical school of adherents to this perspective (defensive realists) maintain that credibility and intentions can be accurately signaled and perceived. Defensive Realists do not of course suggest that uncertainty can be eliminated. Schelling correctly emphasized that if all cases of deterrence were successful, international politics would resemble domestic politics. "But uncertainty exists…Not all the frontiers and thresholds are precisely defined, fully reliable and known to be so beyond the least temptation to test them out."[42]

Overall, Jervis's work drew a line between "psychological explanations" of international politics, created by generalizing from individual-based cognitive theories and systematic appraisals of the impact of psychological factors. The implications were far-reaching. The notion, in cognitive narratives, that "psychological principles can be invoked in vacuo i.e., apart from their economic, political, or sociological context"[43] was severely, and justifiably, qualified. Perceptions, therefore, should be regarded as a mediating factor through which information is filtered. For this reason, they do not a priori constitute a set of "distorting lenses" which condemn actors to sub-optimal choices.

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[42] Schelling, T. (1966), *Arms and Influence*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 92.
[43] Tedeschi, J. and E. Malagodi (1964), "Psychology and International Relations," *American Behavioral Scientist*, 8:2, p. 12.

On the contrary, Jervis suggests that cognitive mechanisms are the tools allowing humans to remain rational in the face of complexity and stress. "Our environment presents us with so many conflicting and ambiguous stimuli that we could not maintain a coherent view if we did not use our concepts and beliefs to impose some order on it."[44] As Tetlock and McGuire admit, "reliance on prior beliefs and expectations is not irrational per se (one would expect it from a' good Bayesian'); it becomes irrational only when perseverance and denial dominate openness and flexibility."[45] The implication is that rationality can be approximated through a "recalibration" of perceptions, even under conditions of stress and ambiguity. Therefore, despite the danger that policy makers may avoid to critically scrutinize preconceived notions when placed under the threat of armed force,[46] the potential for in-crisis rationality appears to be well-grounded in theory.

4.3: Accurate Perceptions and Crises

While the argument that crises may engender accurate perceptions was never systematically explored in the literature, scholars have already shown that accurate perceptions can coexist with escalation and even armed conflict. James Fearon indicated that in crises, one or both parties may possess private information, related to either relative power or the assigned value of the issue at stake.[47] In this context, actors have to balance their desire to avoid a costly war

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[44] Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," pp. 24-25.
[45] Tetlock, P. and C. McGuire Jr., (1986), "Cognitive Perspectives on Foreign Policy," in S. Long (ed.), *Political Behavior Annual,* Boulder, CO: Westview Press, p. 160.
[46] Jervis, R. (1979), "Deterrence Theory Revisited," *World Politics,* 31:2, p. 306.
[47] Fearon, J. (1995), "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, 49:3, pp. 379-414;

with their desire to ensure a favourable outcome in this bargaining process. As a result, one or both of the actors involved may have an incentive to withhold information, by misrepresenting for instance its resolve to fight for the particular issue, thereby increasing the probability for escalation and the outbreak of war.[48] This is because escalating steps, such as the mobilization of troops, may generate audience costs that render retrenchment excessively costly in political terms.[49]

A related, though slightly different situation arises when states choose to bluff by concealing their capabilities in an effort to secure a tactical advantage before a conflict.[50] Consequently, as the cost of indicating the real extent of capabilities increases, the danger of conflict is also exacerbated. Hiding intentions is also a possibility that generates strategic surprise. A state can acquire a tactical advantage by mobilizing or deploying its troops in secret, or calling up its reserves without sending a corresponding signal.[51] The literature on strategic surprise has established firmly the possibility that misperception during crises may not be the result of cognitive shortcomings, but be part of a deliberate attempt to acquire an advantage which inadvertently increases the chance of armed conflict.[52]

Instances interpreted as cases of misperception can be thus viewed under a different light. The American failure to detect the Japanese intention to launch a first strike during World War II has been interpreted as an instance of careful Japanese planning. The Japanese, well-aware of the substantial American advantage in the Pacific theatre and the capacity of the United States to block oil

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[48] ibid
[49] Fearon, "Signaling versus the balance of power and interests."
[50] Fearon, "Rationalist Explanations for War."
[51] Betts, R. (1982), *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning*, Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
[52] Critchley, J. (1978), *Warning and response: A study of surprise attack in the 20th century and an analysis of its lessons for the future*, New York: Crane Russak.

supplies, executed this seemingly absurd offensive in an effort to consolidate their position in South-East Asia.[53] The Japanese were successful in halting American advancements in the region for a considerable time, leading to the eventual loss of the Philippines and thereby rendering the entire American west coast vulnerable to further attacks. Only after the battle of Midway, in early June 1942, the Japanese advantage in the Pacific can be safely said to have been nullified.[54] In the case of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, the Israelis could have had a better estimate of hostilities, had the Egyptians not deliberately downplayed their military capabilities, by "revealing", for example, that their newly acquired weaponry from the USSR was incompatible with existing systems.[55]

Overall, psychological narratives often argue that decision-making mechanisms are too complex to allow scholars to retain their faith in rationality. "First, many of our cognitive processes are inaccessible to us. People do not know what information they use or how they use it. They think some information is crucial when it is not and report that they are not influenced at all by some data on which in fact they rely. This makes it easier for them to overestimate the sophistication of their thought processes."[56] This may be so, but the argument should go both ways: In hindsight, it may be easy to label decisions made by leaders as irrational, but cognitive narratives often under-estimate the human capacity to deal effectively with demanding, complex situations.[57] Psychological explanations should avoid broad generalizations and clarify when non-rational

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[53] Spector, R. (1985), *Eagle against the Sun*, New York: Free Press.
[54] Lai, B. (2004), "The Effects of Different Types of Military Mobilization on the Outcome of International Crises," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 48:2, p. 217.
[55] Lai, "The Effects of Different Types of Military Mobilization on the Outcome of International Crises," p. 221.
[56] Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," p. 21.
[57] Wagner, H. (1992), "Rationality and Misperception in Deterrence Theory," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 4:2, p. 136.

factors affected decision-making. Moreover, cognitive narratives often imply a rational benchmark, which should also be clarified if scholars intend to generate a "systematic consideration of deviations from rationality."[58]

Scholars have produced accounts of decision-making which indicate that rational decision-making under stress and ambiguity is a plausible expectation. As early as 1961, Sidney Verba had concluded in an influential study that rationality may be more closely approximated in emergencies when important values are threatened and the time for deliberation is limited.[59] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, moreover, advocated the applicability of a rational, expected utility decision making model at the brink of war (though his analysis is not limited to crises).[60] The outcome of both the Cuban Missile Crisis[61] and Nasser's behaviour in 1967 which led to the Six Day War[62] have been suggested as instances of rational decision-making during tense interstate crises. Seeing past Nasser's ultimate failure, Mor delved into the calculations of Egypt's leader in 1967 which revolved around his desire to reclaim Egypt's leadership position in the Arab world without escalating to war. Mor asserts that when attention "is shifted from Nasser's failure to his objectives and perception of the strategic context, the crisis decisions of the Egyptian leader can be shown to have been consistent with strategic rationality."[63] It was thus neither Nasser's cognitive deficiencies nor the loss of control in a

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[58] Ibid, p. 116.

[59] Verba, S. (1961), "Assumptions of Rationality and Non-Rationality in Models of the International System," in K. Knorr and S. Verba (eds.), *The International System: Theoretical Essays*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 93-117.

[60] Bueno de Mesquita, B. (1981), *The War Trap,* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[61] Snyder, J. (1978), "Rationality at the Brink: The Role of Cognitive Processes in Failures of Deterrence," *World Politics*, 30:3, pp. 345-365.

[62] Mor, B. (1991), "Nasser's Decision-making in the 1967 Middle East Crisis: A Rational-choice Explanation," *Journal of Peace Research*, 28:4, p. 359.

[63] Ibid.

brinkmanship crisis that brought the Six Day War, which could be attributed to Israel's inability to communicate effectively its red line to the Egyptian leader.

The possibility that critical incidents may actually enhance the accuracy of cognitive mechanisms has also been entertained. Empirical evidence showed that crises have an ambiguous impact on escalation dynamics. According to Snyder and Diesing "Some crises embitter and worsen subsequent relations, others improve them."[64] In extreme cases, signals could even break perceptual barriers, forcing a rational "realignment." Ben-Zvi, upon examining the Sino-Indian Border War of 1962, focused on the nature of perceptual discrepancies of Indian leaders. He came to the conclusion that before conflict erupted, intentions were well known to all sides. The assumption originally held by Indian policy-makers was that the Chinese would eventually be pressured by Indian firmness into accepting India's point of view regarding the disputed border area. This well-established conviction was, however, partially abandoned in the face of incoming tactical warning signals.[65]

By mapping the evolution of cognitive sophistication among Soviet and American policymakers, Theodore Raphael suggested that cognitive complexity may be reduced before crises, contributing to their initiation. However, cognitive complexity may well be reinstated during interstate crises with substantial benefits regarding the prospects for a peaceful resolution. Raphael showed that during the tense superpower crises in Berlin in 1946 and 1962, the capacity of

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[64] Snyder, G. and P. Diesing, (1977), *Conflict Among Nations: Bargaining, Decision Making, and System Structure in International Crises*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, p. 19.
[65] Ben-Zvi, "Intention, Capability and Surprise," p. 23.

decision makers to undertake sophisticated analyses increased as the crisis progressed, contributing decisively to the eventual de-escalation.[66]

Therefore, conditions of stress associated with the limited time horizon and the high stakes related to the issue at hand, may create an environment which enhances the capacity for rational decision-making. Levite accordingly concludes that: "strategic warning originating in reliable sources has a demonstrated capacity to overcome barriers to receptivity, force its way to and impose itself on policy makers, thereby potentially preventing [complete] surprise (although not unpreparedness) from taking place."[67] Overall, cognitive contributions may downplay the capacity of decision-making units to predicate their behavior on the actual conditions they face, overcoming deceptive tactics, noise and uncertainty in crises.[68] Thus, despite the psychological dangers of stressful circumstances, there is ground for optimism.

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[66] Raphael, T. (1982), "Integrative Complexity Theory and Forecasting International Crises: Berlin 1946-1962," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 26:3, pp. 423-450.

[67] Levite, A. (1987), *Intelligence and Strategic Surprises,* New York: Columbia University Press, p. 27.

[68] Snyder and Diesing, *Conflict Among Nations*, pp. 291-297.

Chapter 5:

Research Design

5.1: Methodology: Overview and Justification

The nature of the variables to be examined renders a qualitative case study approach an appropriate avenue for the particular project. According to Gerring, a case study is an "intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units," where a unit denotes a "spatially bounded phenomenon," which is "observed at a single point in time or over some delimited period of time."[1] Although a number of scholars argue that case studies cannot by themselves test theories[2] a consensus is gradually formed around the notion that a small number of case studies can successfully be employed to test any theory that generates specific hypotheses.[3] In this project, a process-tracing methodology (a sub-type of case study research) will be employed to test the theoretical hypotheses regarding the impact of interstate crises on leadership perceptions.

King, Keohane, and Verba define process tracing most simply as a methodological approach providing an account of causality through identifying causal mechanisms.[4] "Thick description explores the unfolding of complex historical factors and contingencies and places a premium on selecting cases that

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[1] Gerring, J. (2004), "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?," *American Political Science Review*, 98:2, p. 342.
[2] Geddes, B. (1990), "How the Cases You Choose Affect the Answers You Get: Selection Bias in Comparative Politics," Political Analysis, 2:1 pp. 131-150, p. 149.
[3] Dion, D. (1998), "Evidence and inference in the comparative case study," *Comparative Politics*, 30:1, pp. 127-146.
[4] King, G. et. al. (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 85-86.

are clearly significant, even if singular."[5] Process tracing is thus a tool of qualitative analysis, aiming at identifying, validating and refining causal inference within case studies in a theoretically informed way. In a similar vein, George and Bennett defined process tracing as a "method [that] attempts to identify the intervening causal process - the causal chain and causal mechanism- between an independent variable (or variables) and the outcome of the dependent variable."[6]

In selected case studies, diagnostic pieces of evidence, called causal-process observations, are examined as part of a temporal sequence of events in an effort to support or overturn explanatory hypotheses. Process tracing is widely used due to its "explicit focus on using the strengths of case studies - their rich detail, ability to chart the sequence of variables and sensitivity to the direction of causality."[7] George and Bennett distinguish between process-tracing and historical narrative by asserting that process-tracing "requires converting a purely historical account that implies or asserts a causal sequence into an analytical explanation couched in theoretical variables that have been identified in the research design."[8]

Numerous phenomena in the social sciences involve complex causal dynamics and this complexity may result in poor case selection and flawed inferences.[9] Unsurprisingly, international relations theories are almost never monocausal. Wohlforth points out that "the claim is rarely "A, not B, caused E," but rather

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[5] Barnes, J. and N. Weller (2011), "The Promise of Process Tracing: Case selection in a World of Causal Complexity," p. 4, available at SSRN: http://ssrn.com/abstract=1804128, [accessed 12/10/2014].
[6] George, A. and A. Bennett (2005), *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences*, Cambridge, and London: MIT Press, p. 206. Causal mechanisms are defined (p. 137) as "ultimately unobservable physical, social, or psychological processes through which agents with causal capacities operate, but only in specific contexts or conditions, to transfer energy, information, or matter to other entities."
[7] Barnes and Weller, "The Promise of Process Tracing," p. 2.
[8] Bennett, A. and A. George (1997), "Process Tracing in Case Study Research," MacArthur Foundation Workshop on Case Study Methods, 17-19/10/1997, available at http://users.polisci.wisc.edu/kritzer/teaching/ps816/ProcessTracing.htm, [accessed 25/04/2013].
[9] Barnes and Weller, "The Promise of Process Tracing," p. 3.

"both A and B caused E but A was more important."[10] The use of process tracing, beyond its utility in adjudicating among alternative hypotheses, can yield a more nuanced descriptive understanding through the close engagement with cases, which eventually strengthens causal inference. In this regard, process-tracing will be employed to both establish and assess the severity and direction of the impact of crises on leadership perceptions. The selected methodology in this research project allows for a detailed narrative which aims at a) establishing causality, b) measuring the degree of change in dependent variables (leadership perceptions) and c) assessment of the direction of that change (more/less accurate perceptions).

5.2: Addressing Rationality

In a research project that aims to assess the rationality (or lack thereof) in decision-making, defining what "rational" thinking is all about constitutes a fundamental obligation of a research design discussion. This becomes more important when one considers the lack of consensus among social scientists on the definition of rationality. An instrumental conception of rationality is an appropriate choice for the specific goals of the project, as it will allow analysis to focus not on what the policy goals of leaders are, but on whether decision-makers select the best means available to them, under constraints, in order to achieve their objectives. According to Stein, "the minimal, commonsensical requirements of rationality in foreign policy decision-making expect that policy makers can learn from history, that they can draw some propositions from the past and apply these propositions in an appropriate way to the future as they weigh the likely consequences of the

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[10] Wohlforth, W. (1994), "Realism and the End of the Cold War," *International Security*, 19:3, p. 94.

options they face."[11] This fundamental yardstick of rationality will be the implicit guide of analysis throughout the evaluation of selected case studies.

Therefore, "the rationality assumption tells us nothing about how actors form their preferences, but rather shows how actors behave, given their preferences."[12] This approach is particularly suitable for evaluating decision-making under conditions of crisis. Due to the short time frame and specific issue area context of such incidents, the preferences of actors are, more often than not, clearly discernible and stable for the duration of the crisis. Analysis can thus focus on how decisions are reached, rather than on the evaluation of possible alternatives.

In crises, states seek to maximize their interests and at the same time avoid an unwanted escalation. Uncertainty is exacerbated, due to factors such as severe time limits, the high stakes involved and the potential use of deceptive tactics undertaken by actors. Leaders should therefore not be expected to somehow see through the "fog of war"[13] but think strategically, taking into account in an informed manner the capabilities and potential responses of their own forces as well as the capabilities and interests of adversaries and other third parties involved, such as allies and regional powers. Therefore, a rational management of a crisis by the state leadership could be indicated when statements and actions reflect the pursuit of goals under a probabilistic logic that incorporates uncertainty and possible interactions.[14]

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[11] Stein, J. (2008) "Foreign policy decision making: rational, psychological, and neurological models," in S. Smith et. al. (eds.), *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 131-132.
[12] Bueno de Mesquita, B. (1981), *The War Trap,* New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 31.
[13] Clausewitz, C., *On War,* ed. by A. Rapoport, Baltimore, MD: Penguin Books, 1968.
[14] Levy, J. and W. Thompson (2010), *Causes of War*, Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, p. 130.

Finally, a crisis rarely ends after a single action. Instead, international crises often consist of a series of successive interactions that either lead to the outbreak of war or to de-escalation. An additional benchmark of rationality should therefore be the capacity of actors to receive, process and adapt to new information derived from these interactions. According to Levy, "feedback from one decision should reveal information about adversary intentions (and perhaps the intentions of third states) and possibly about relative military capabilities as well."[15] After being "forced" to reveal additional information on motivations and/or capabilities during crises, actors have every interest in incorporating any new data in their calculations.

5.3: Crises as an Independent Variable

Another issue that needs to be addressed concerns the choice of the independent variable. Selecting crises, as opposed to "Militarised Interstate Disputes" (MIDs), as a focal point of this research deserves closer scrutiny, since MIDs are an equally important (if not defining) characteristic of rivalries. MIDs have indeed been proven useful towards identifying the root causes and origins of conflicts, but their inclusiveness also renders them inappropriate for the extraction of robust causal relationships from a few case studies. A MID is defined as "a set of interactions between or among states involving threats to use military force, displays of military force, or actual uses of military force."[16]

For an interaction to qualify for inclusion in a MID dataset, the minimal requirement is that one of the states threatens to use force against the other. MID

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[15] Levy and Thompson, *Causes of War*, p. 132.
[16] Gochman, C. and Z. Maoz (1984), "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1976: Procedures, Patterns, and Insights," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 28:4, p. 587.

collections, therefore, contain many low-level events that pose little risk for actual military hostilities. Oneal and Russett have even argued that such disputes pose a marginal security risk and should thus be excluded from attempts to explain serious conflict.[17] Finally, the classification of an event as a MID remains a contentious issue, whereas the "International Crisis Behaviour" dataset applies specific, widely accepted criteria for a dispute to qualify as an interstate crisis.[18]

Crises are strictly defined phenomena. For a dispute to qualify as an international crisis, leaders must perceive a heightened probability of military hostilities, a grave threat to national values, and a shortened and finite time within which to reach decisions.[19] The choice of this project to focus on crisis rests on the premise of enhanced "visibility" of causal processes made possible by the study of crises, due to their intensity and finite duration, which render them highly distinguishable from other smaller-scale events. Psychological studies are most relevant when one or more of the following applies: 1) situations are not routine, 2) decisions are made by senior officials, 3) situations are ambiguous, 4) there is information overload, 5) events are unanticipated, 6) stress is great, and 7) long-range planning takes place.[20] With the possible exception of the last condition, crises can be said to address these criteria in a comprehensive way. We could thus suggest that while MIDs may as well produce a similar effect on perceptions, deploying crises increases the potential for highly observable changes on the dependent variable.

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[17] Oneal, J. and B. Russett, (2003), "Assessing the Liberal Peace with Alternative Specifications: Trade Still Reduces Conflict," in G. Schneider et. al., (eds.), *Globalization and Armed Conflict*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, pp. 143-164.

[18] International Crisis Behavior Project dataset, Center for International Development and Conflict Management, University of Maryland, at http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/icb/, [accessed 12 November 2014].

[19] Brecher, M. and J. Wilkenfeld, (2000), *A Study of Crisis*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, p. 3.

[20] Holsti, O. (1976), "Foreign Policy Formation Viewed Cognitively," in R. Axelrod (ed.), *Structure of Decision,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 29-30.

5.4: Assessing Perceptions – The Dependent Variable

Evaluating perceptions is a complex research undertaking. Initially, one has to specify the manner in which "accurate" perceptions will be identified. Arguments based on "misperception" are centered on the assumption that there is a standard which allows observers to distinguish accurate from inaccurate perceptions. This standard is usually elusive in international politics. For years after events unfolded, perceptions and their accuracy remain contentious for political scientists. However, a process tracing approach with its rich detail can shed light on both the change and relative accuracy of leadership perceptions. The goal here is not to establish how far or close exactly perceptions were against an abstract, fully objective reality, but to witness the evolution of the decision-making process, the movement of leadership perceptions over the rationality axis within the finite time constraints of a crisis. A detailed, qualitative analysis is arguably in a position to offer this kind of insight.

Overall, the literature on misperception and conflict has converged to identifying the constituent elements of threat perception. Theory posits that two categories of perceptions A) perceptions of intentions and B) perceptions of capabilities, may lead to conflict and are thus important for the study of international politics.[21] These types of misperception are analytically distinct and amenable to empirical analysis. After all, "if the concept of misperception is to be a useful one, it must be defined and operationalized independently from the factors from which it arises."[22] As pointed out, the political psychology discipline is replete with

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[21] Levy, J. (1983), "Misperception and the Causes of War: Theoretical Linkages and Analytical Problems," *World Politics*, 36:1, p. 80.
[22] Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War," p. 79.

analytical works emphasizing varying cognitive shortcomings that affect the quality of decision-making. In International Relations, however, these psychological deficits are analytically important when they affect the aforementioned two categories of perceptions through which they can subsequently affect decision-making.

Ralph White's "selective inattention," for instance, should be best understood not as a misperception per se, but as a process that may generate misperception.[23] Similarly, as Levy pointed out, idealized self-images or "demonized" images of adversaries should not be treated as misperceptions in their own right, but instead as beliefs that may cause misperceptions.[24] It is thus entirely possible to have both an erroneous enemy image and correct enemy perceptions, where other factors prevail upon the formation of leadership assessments. For this reason, focusing on the fundamental constituent elements of threat perception, i.e. the intentions and capabilities of parties involved, is a methodologically sound avenue.

Another crucial question concerns the manner in which we can actually measure misperception because of problems associated with the nature and complexity of intentions and capabilities. Intentions can be conceptualised as a "state's ambitions, how it is likely to act to achieve those ambitions, and the costs it will bear to realize those goals."[25] Parameters affecting intentions such as the adversary's value structure, its definition of the situation, its expectations about the future and the domestic constraints on its freedom of action are particularly

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[23] White, R. (1970), *Nobody Wanted War: Misperception in Vietnam and Other Wars*, Garden City, N. Y.: Anchor Books.
[24] Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War," p. 80.
[25] Edelstein, D. (2002), "Managing Uncertainty: Beliefs about Intentions and the Rise of Great Powers," *Security Studies,* 12:1, p. 3.

difficult to evaluate.[26] In conflictual relationships, intentions can be either expressed through statements or actions. In interstate crises, statements of interest include deterrent and compellent threats aimed at preventing the "other" from engaging in a course of action or coercing it to undertake unwanted actions respectively. But intentions can also be outlined through actions. Non-verbal signals in crises may take the form of displays of force (including the forward deployment of forces), military maneuvers and even political measures such as the withdrawal of diplomatic personnel. All these highly observable elements will be considered, scrutinized and evaluated.

A major issue in evaluating an actor's assessment of the intentions and capabilities of another party is the pervasiveness of uncertainty and deception in international politics. Even when actors are truthful about their intentions and goals, uncertainty can be caused by inadvertent dynamics, such as the operation of a "security dilemma," in which states seeking to bolster their security undertake actions that are perceived as hostile by another state.[27] Such dynamics may lead to escalation, particularly in interactions where offense and defence are hard to distinguish (possibly because a defensive weapon accords a decisive strategic advantage).[28] In many occasions, uncertainty has more deliberate origins. Leaders may possess an incentive to deceive and bluff regarding the extent of their capabilities or their resolve to follow a particular course of action. Saddam Hussein did not reveal the end of his WMD program to the international community, in a misguided effort

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[26] Levy, "Misperception and the Causes of War."

[27] Jervis, R. (1978), "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics*, 30:2, pp. 167-214; Glaser, C. (1997), "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, 50:1, pp. 171-201.

[28] Glaser, C. and C. Kaufman (1988), "What is the offense-defense balance and can we measure it?," *International Security*, 22:4, pp. 44-82.

to maintain a credible deterrent against Iran, Iraq's historical rival.[29] As a result, Iraqi ambiguity magnified threat perceptions in Washington during the sensitive post – September 11 period, contributing to escalation and the 2003 war.

With regards to assessing capabilities, moreover, complex parameters such as morale, leadership and the quality of intelligence render their evaluation a challenging task in the absence of hostilities. The administrative and political capacity with which resources are transformed into effective military forces is particularly unpredictable.[30] In World War II, Germany underestimated the ability of the U.S. government to divert resources from other sectors to the cause of war.[31] Overall, where crises do not lead to open warfare, the evaluation of both intentions and capabilities as "accurate" is probabilistic, as intentions and war-fighting capacity were not eventually put to the test. Nevertheless, the detailed assessment of case studies can still provide a solid estimate of both. Authors such as Jervis showed that even intangible qualities such as intentions can be measured, when he juxtaposed what the leaders perceived to what was actually meant by signals and statements across his case studies.[32] A detailed comparison of pre and post-crisis perceptions, evaluated against the historical record, should generate a sound estimate of both their change and relative accuracy.

If perceptions can be measured, then the question shifts to whose perceptions analysis should focus on. A goal of this project is to escape the analytic pitfalls of individual-centred perspectives. The particular traits, preferences, mental

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[29] Lake, D. (2011), "Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War," *International Security*, 35:3, pp. 7-52.

[30] Knorr, K. (1970), *Military Power and Potential,* Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, chs. 4-5.

[31] Iklé, F. (1971), *Every War Must End,* New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 20-21.

[32] Jervis, R. (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

strengths and shortcomings of individual leaders certainly matter in decision-making and perhaps so in crises. After all, individual decision-makers possess varying personalities and belief systems which naturally lead to varying perceptions of threats and opportunities. But focusing on certain leaders would not allow for generalizations to be made regarding the impact of crises in international politics. Psychoanalytic perspectives offer little in terms of theoretical insight, even though their contribution to the study of particular historical figures is well-established.

This present research assumes that a state, a collectivity, can be considered as a unitary actor, possessing a single set of perceptions, an analytically risky proposition. According to Goldsmith, "such state-level analysis is necessary if we are to try to understand foreign policy as more than an idiosyncratic phenomenon. Cognitive factors must be considered within the context of an organization if we are to understand subjects such as "U.S. foreign policy" as opposed to "Jimmy Carter's foreign policy." Without some conception of the state as the unit of analysis, there can be no generalizations about foreign policy, and no comparative study of foreign policy, as opposed to the study of foreign policy makers."[33]

Scholars have already examined perceptions at the unit (state) level.[34] The possibility of learning at the state level has also been convincingly argued with organizational theory producing accounts which treat the state as a unitary actor, capable of learning.[35] Whereas it is individuals who observe and learn from their

[33] Goldsmith, B. (2005), *Imitation in International Relations: Observational Learning, Analogies and Foreign Policy in Russia and Ukraine*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 31.
[34] For an overview see Rose, G. (1998), "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy," *World Politics*, 51:1, pp. 144-172.
[35] See for example Argyris, C. (1992), *On Organizational Learning*, Oxford: Blackwell Business; Cohen, M. and L. Sproull (eds.) (1996), *Organizational Learning*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

environment, therefore, collectives may also possess the same capacity "to the extent that policy experiences become assimilated into organizational doctrine, structures, decision-making procedures, personnel systems, and organizational commitments."[36] Moreover, major incidents such as conflicts, often labelled "formative events"[37] are particularly conducive towards engendering learning at the state level, as they affect the perceptual predispositions of a large number of members within a particular organization. According to Jervis, such lessons can subsequently "become institutionalized."[38] The underlying assumption is that individuals do not operate anymore as mere units. From a certain point onward, a specific set of perceptions is "internalized" at the highest levels of decision-making, allowing for a unified understanding of the particular situation.

In the case studies evaluated, a qualitative assessment of each crisis reveals the individuals responsible for managing the crisis and it is their common and shared understandings of the situation that will be of prime interest. State institutions, such as the armed forces ministries of foreign affairs should act in a consistent manner. At the same time, analysis will not be oblivious to differentiations and discrepancies in policy making observed in the course of the crises assessed. Individual perceptions and divergences will be highlighted, assuming they become discernible. The literature on perceptions has not yet settled on the debate between individual and group levels, so adopting a methodology that is able to

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[36] Lovell, J. (1984), "'Lessons' of U.S. Military Involvement: Preliminary Conceptualization," in D. Sylvana and S. Chan (eds.), *Foreign Policy Decision Making*, New York: Praeger, p. 135.
[37] See Reiter, D. (1996), *Crucible of Beliefs: Learning, Alliances, and World Wars*, Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, pp. 35-37; Goldsmith, *Imitation in International Relations,* p. 11.
[38] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, p. 238.

detect potential variances between the two would be an appropriate and methodologically sound approach.

Finally, analysis will be centred on the perceptual changes in the weaker member of the antagonistic dyad. One can reasonably expect that the more powerful state will be less responsive or adaptive to actions and signals coming from its rival. The impact on perceptions, as a result, would be harder to measure, as policies enacted by the more powerful state may reflect a multitude of security concerns, due to the "luxury" it can afford to respond to the perceived challenge without drastically adjusting its behaviour. As a result, the impact of the dyadic interaction on perceptions should be more clearly observable across weaker members. In this manner, control for factors unrelated to bilateral affairs can be achieved.

The aforementioned rationale raises the issue of whether there could be true competition between two states, in cases where power asymmetry prohibits one of the antagonists from actually inflicting a defeat on the other. While the existence of power asymmetry between rivals may appear rather implausible, asymmetry seemed to make little difference on the rivalry development between Great Britain and the Netherlands.[39] The historical record contains a number of asymmetrical rivalries such as the China-Taiwan dyad and more notably, the India – Pakistan rivalry, with the phenomenon examined and well documented by scholars such as Vasquez.[40] In a number of cases, tensions were exacerbated by the smaller member of the rivalry which tried to change the status quo. Escalation

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[39] Levy, J. and S. Ali (1998), "From Commercial Competition to Strategic Rivalry to War: The Evolution of the Anglo-Dutch Rivalry, 1609-1652," in P. Diehl (ed.), *The Dynamics of Enduring Rivalries*, Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, pp. 29-63.
[40] Vasquez, J. (1996), "Distinguishing rivals that go to war from those that do not: a quantitative comparative case study of the two paths to war," *International Studies Quarterly*, 40:4, pp. 531-558.; Vasquez, J. (1993), *The War Puzzle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

is indeed more plausible in symmetrical relationships, where the battle for preponderance can be conducive to war.[41] In the final analysis, however, the existence of a rivalry framework implies that both members of the dyad, irrespective of relative capabilities, are to some degree dissatisfied with the status quo and actively seek to change it.

Recently, scholars have come to recognize the pervasiveness of asymmetrical rivalries in world affairs, with data sets suggesting that asymmetrical rivalries may account for nearly 80% of all rival dyads.[42] There is a number of possible factors that may render asymmetry inconsequential to bilateral dynamics. Alliances, for instance, have the capacity to decisively affect an asymmetrical balance of capabilities between rivals. Moreover, the more powerful state may be facing additional security threats that compromise its ability to coerce militarily the weaker member.[43] Another possibility is that asymmetrical rivalries may be linked to symmetrical ones.[44] Escalation by weaker members could therefore constitute a rational course of action.[45] Overall, when dissatisfaction is combined with resolve around a particular issue of intrinsic salience to contenders, even minor powers can succumb to tense, long-term rivalry dynamics. [46]

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[41] According to power transition theory. See Wayman, F. (1996), "Power Shifts and the Onset of War," in J. Kugler and D. Lemke (eds.), *Parity and War: Evaluations and Extensions of the War Ledger,* Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, p. 147; Levy, J. (1987), "Declining Power and the Preventive Motive," *World Politics*, 40:1, pp. 82-107.

[42] Klein, J. et. al. (2006), "The new Rivalry Dataset: Procedures and Patterns," *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:3, pp. 331-348.

[43] Thompson, W. (1995), "Principal Rivalries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39:2, p. 205.

[44] Diehl, P and G. Goertz (2000), *War and Peace in International Rivalry*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, p. 147.

[45] Because decision makers take into account the alternatives, preferences, and possible choices of other relevant actors. See Niou, E. et. al. (1989), *The Balance of Power: Stability in International Systems*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[46] Diehl, P. et. al. (2005), "Theoretical specifications of enduring rivalries: applications to the India–Pakistan case," in: TV Paul (ed.), *The India–Pakistan Rivalry: An Enduring Rivalry*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 36-38.

5.5: Synopsis of Research Design

- **Research Question**

  Do decision makers' perceptions across rival and non-rival dyads become more or less accurate due to international crises?

- **Focus of research:**

  Comparison and evaluation of leadership perceptions <u>before</u> and <u>after</u> the crisis under study. Research will focus on the relatively weaker member of the dyad to control for strategic and/or power calculations that vary across stronger and weaker sides. In essence, actions taken by the more powerful member of the dyads could reflect a number of considerations which are not directly related to the specific crisis and its perceptual impact. Therefore, one can reasonably expect the behaviour of the weaker member to be more revealing of its perceptual shifts. Operating under conditions of stressful interaction is crucial towards assessing the impact of the independent variable and there is a need to ensure that observations reflect the internal dynamics of the dyad, as opposed to external considerations.

- **Sources of evidence**

  Evidence will be sought from policymakers' statements, news pieces from the written and electronic press, government and military policy papers, and of course the detailed scrutiny of actions and adopted policies. Depending on case-selection, different sources of evidence may prove more, or less, important.

Chapter 6:

Case Selection

6.1: Overview and Rationale of Case Selection

Selecting a small number of case studies presents a number of challenges, neatly summarized by Seawright and Gerring: "Consider that most case studies seek to elucidate the features of a broader population. They are about something larger than the case itself, even if the resulting generalization is issued in a tentative fashion (Gerring 2004). In case studies of this sort, the chosen case is asked to perform a heroic role: to stand for (represent) a population of cases that is often much larger than the case itself."[1] In case study research, overall, a twin objective has to be achieved: 1) the selection of a representative sample and 2) the variation of case studies across relevant dimensions.[2]

Three dyads were chosen (Greece-Turkey, Georgia-Russia and Cyprus-Turkey) which appeared most appropriate for the purposes of this research project. All three pairs experienced severe militarized crises between 1996 and 2008, with one of them (Georgia-Russia) escalating to a brief war in 2008. Moreover, the availability of data and my personal familiarity with two of the case studies (Greece-Turkey and Cyprus-Turkey) also contributed to the particular choice. The geographical scope of case studies selected is, to a certain extent, limited. Rivalries after all have been observed throughout the globe, from Latin America, (Brazil – Argentina) to the Asia Pacific (China – Japan). It would therefore be

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[1] Seawright, J. and J. Gerring (2008), "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options, *Political Research Quarterly*, 61:2, p. 294.
[2] Seawright and Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research, p. 296.

interesting to see whether perceptual adjustments due to crises somehow differ across regions. However, the limited number of case studies in a thesis research project requires a case selection based on the prioritization of variance in the independent variable (severity of crisis), as well as in those qualities which could theoretically affect its impact on the dependent variable (degree of rivalry intensity and power symmetry), in addition to author familiarity with case studies. Overall, case selection was undertaken under the following considerations:

1) Selecting rival and non-rival dyads: This is more complicated than it initially appears. The proliferation of rivalry research has led to multiple definitions and as a result, a qualitative analysis necessitates a theory-driven selection of nonrandom cases.[3] Considerations are thoroughly analyzed in the upcoming section, but the underlying thinking was to include (table 6-A) dyads that are unanimously accepted as rivals (Greece and Turkey) and non-rivals (Georgia and Russia) by relevant scholarly works so that selection bias can be avoided.

2) Variance in the independent variable: It is important to ensure that the possible range of crises is explored in order to maximize inferential leverage. Crises are not monolithic. The disadvantages of MIDs are thankfully not present in the study of crises, though crisis intensity can vary significantly. For this reason, a crisis that never escalated to the use of force (Cyprus – Turkey) and a crisis that culminated in open warfare (Georgia-Russia) are evaluated. In the case of Greece and Turkey, a limited use of force was undertaken, and de-escalation ensued.

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[3] King, G. et. al. (1994), *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, pp. 124-128.

3) Symmetrical and asymmetrical dyads: The merits of focusing on the weaker side of the dyad were discussed in the previous section. However, bias may yet be inserted if dyads under scrutiny are all either symmetrical or asymmetrical, as one could assume that the perceptual impact of a crisis could vary between a "relatively weaker" and a "far weaker" member of a competitive dyad. For this reason, a symmetrical dyad, at least at the time of the crisis (Greece-Turkey) was included, along with two asymmetrical dyads (Cyprus-Turkey and Georgia-Russia). Parity is assumed when neither competitor exceeds a 3:1 power ratio compared to the other state.[4] This is the reason for labelling the Greco-Turkish rivalry symmetrical, even though there is a visible difference in capabilities between the two nations. At the time of the crisis in question (1996), however, the power ratio for the two countries was well within the suggested symmetry limits.

4) The particularities of process tracing: A familiarity with selected cases can be helpful towards discerning causal relations in detailed case studies. Antagonisms in the international system are rarely isolated phenomena. Gerring notes that "case studies are not immaculately conceived; additional units always loom in the background."[5] "Background cases often play a key role in case study analysis. They are not cases per se, but they are nonetheless integrated into the analysis in an informal manner."[6] The presence of other competitive relationships in the case studies (Russia vs the U.S./NATO in the Georgian case or Greece vs

[4] Klein, J. et. al. (2006), "The new rivalry dataset: procedures and patterns," *Journal of Peace Research*, 43:3, pp. 331-348.
[5] Gerring, J. (2004), "What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?," *American Political Science Review*, 98:2, p. 344.
[6] Seawright and Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research," p. 294.

Turkey in the Cypriot case) render causal inference challenging. Possessing an in-depth understanding of case studies selected, therefore, can be advantageous.

Table 6-A: Case Studies Selected, Symmetry, Adherence to Rivalry Definitions and Crisis Intensity

Dyad	Rel. Capabilities	Dispute Density Def.	Discourse-based Def.	Crisis Density Def.	Crisis Intensity
Greece-Turkey	Symmetrical	Rivals	Rivals	Rivals	Limited Use of Force
Georgia-Russia	Asymmetrical	Non-Rivals	Non-Rivals	Non-Rivals	Escalation to War
Cyprus-Turkey	Asymmetrical	Rivals	Non-Rivals	Non-Rivals	No Use of Force

6.2: Rivalry Definition and Case Selection

The early (and mostly quantitative in nature) literature conceived rivalries in behavioural terms, focusing on what rival states do when they engage in such a relationship. Empirically, enduring rivalries were defined as a set of repeated militarized interstate disputes (MIDs)[7] between the same set of states over an extended period of time. Goertz and Diehl used a MID threshold to operationalize the competitiveness requirement, defining rivalries as those pairs of states with at least six MIDs within a period of 20 years.[8] Proto-rivalries were further specified to be those dyads that experience up to five MIDs but fail to reach the enduring rivalry requirement within a 20 year period. Isolated conflicts were termed to be conflicts that involve one or two disputes at maximum and hence do not escalate

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[7] MIDs are recorded by the "Correlates of War" project Militarized Interstate Dispute dataset, at www.correlatesofwar.org [accessed 16/11/2014].

[8] Goertz, G. and P. Diehl, (2000), "The Concept and Measurement of Rivalries," in P. Diehl and G. Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press*, pp. 44-46.

to the proto or enduring stage.[9] Definitions such as the aforementioned, assuming a rivalry emerges after a certain amount of disputes, present a disadvantage, as the existence of a rivalry that fails to meet the numerical threshold is possible.[10]

Subsequent criticism of behavioural definitions yielded a different, discourse-based perspective, which instead focused more on the perceptual elements of rivalries. Vasquez defined a rivalry as a relationship characterized by tense competition, usually accompanied by psychological hostility.[11] Similarly, Thompson identified rivalries through a careful examination of the historical record, labelling as rivals those states that perceive each other as a threat without necessarily engaging in militarized disputes or conflict.[12] Under this definition, Thompson identified a larger population of rivals (173 from 1816 to 1999).[13] While Thompson's strategic rivalry variable is advantageous because of its reliance on historical analysis, the MID threshold definition includes low-level rivals and non-rival competitors, so that rivals can be tested against the two other categories of competitive dyads.

Finally, Hewitt's crisis-density approach combined behavioural and perceptual elements, identifying rivals as states involved in prolonged conflicts featuring recurrent crises. A crisis-based definition could contribute towards a more systematic appraisal of rivalries because it combines behavioural and perceptual elements, while maintaining a replicable method of classification. The perceptual dimension is supported by this approach, as for a dispute to qualify as a crisis, the

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[9] Ibid.

[10] Colaresi, M. et. al. (2007), *Strategic Rivalries in World Politics: Position, Space and Conflict Escalation, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,* pp. 51-52.

[11] Vasquez, J. (1993), *The War Puzzle*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 75-76.

[12] Thompson, W. (1995), "Principal Rivalries," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39:2, p. 201.

[13] Thompson, W. (2001), "Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly,* 45:4, pp. 557-586.

ICB project applies specific criteria, including the perceived intensity of threat by foreign policy leaders.[14] A crisis-density definition could thus be considered as a conceptual link between behavioural and perceptual definitions.

Defining the concept of rivalries is a contentious issue, though it is a common occurrence in social sciences to have multidimensional concepts, leading to debates regarding which dimensions should be considered essential for their conceptualization.[15] However, the issue of rivalry definition poses a real problem for case selection, with scholars associated with each approach developing unique sets of cases that fulfil their criteria. Depending on the number of disputes required to reach the rivalry threshold, the time period under analysis, or the role of perceptions, the number of rivalries varies from as few as 34 to as many as 290.

This project proceeded to a case selection across definitional thresholds, adhering to diverse conceptualizations (table 6-A). Three different rivalry definitions will be considered towards case selection: Hewitt's crisis-density definition (threshold of crises within a specific time-frame),[16] a dispute density definition (different thresholds of MIDs within a specific time-frame, various authors[17]) and Thompson's discourse-based definition, a classification methodology based on a detailed examination of the historical record.[18] In this manner, problems associated with concept construction can be avoided. This is important since a

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[14] Three conditions are stipulated: "a threat to one or more basic values, along with an awareness of finite time for response to the value threat, and a heightened probability of involvement in military hostilities" (Brecher, M. and J. Wilkenfeld, (2000), *A Study of Crisis*, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, p. 3.

[15] Goertz, G. (2006), "Social Science Concepts: A User's Guide," Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, p. 6.

[16] Hewitt, J. (2005), "A Crisis-Density Formulation for Identifying Rivalries," *Journal of Peace Research*, 42:2, pp. 183-200.

[17] Diehl and Goertz, *War and Peace in International Rivalry*; Bennett, S. (1996), "Security, bargaining, and the end of interstate rivalry", *International Studies Quarterly,* 40:2, pp. 157-183; Bennett, S. (1998), "Integrating and Testing Models of Rivalry," *American Journal of Political Science*, 42:4, pp. 1200-1232.

[18] Thompson, "Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics," pp. 557–586.

selected concept structure "interacts in various, usually hidden, ways with theories and hypotheses that researchers want to test."[19] By choosing particular populations for analysis, selected concept structures could bias the results.

6.3: The Independent Variable and Case Selection

In case selection, the independent variable assumes prime importance. Security crises are not monolithic. While the ICB project datasets have established widely accepted criteria, there is a high degree of variability within the crises population, which should be accounted for in case selection. While some crises escalate only as far as political rhetoric threatening the enemy with escalation, others go further, resulting in coercive policies such as troop mobilization or even the outbreak of hostilities. Scholars have identified five different levels corresponding to the intensity of crisis escalation:[20] (1) no action (no escalation); (2) the threat of war; (3) the display of force; (4) the use of force; and (5) war (the maximum).[21] Analytically, the most important threshold is the use of force, as there is a "fundamental distinction between coercive behaviour where force is and is not employed."[22] For this reason, cases will be selected across this empirical boundary, with a representation of crises which ended without the use of force and crises which escalated to either a limited use of force or an all-out war.

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[19] Hewitt, J. and G. Goertz (2005), "Conceptualizing Interstate Conflict: How Do Concept-Building Strategies Relate to Selection Effects?," *International Interactions*, 31:2, pp. 163-182.
[20] Carlson, L. (1995), "A Theory of Escalation and International Conflict," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 39:3, pp. 511-534; Geller, D. (1990), "Nuclear Weapons, Deterrence, and Crisis Escalation," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 34:2, pp. 291-310.
[21] What distinguishes war from the use of force is 1,000 or more battle fatalities: Gochman, C. and Z. Maoz (1984), "Militarized Interstate Disputes, 1816-1976: Procedures, Patterns, and Insights," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 28:4, p. 589.
[22] Geller, "Nuclear Weapons, Deterrence, and Crisis Escalation," p. 303, footnote 18.

A question that follows from the case selection rationale would be connected to the analytical merits of case studies which actually escalated to open warfare. Would escalation in war indicate that a crisis led to exacerbated misperception? Not necessarily. It is important to stress that the outbreak of hostilities is not necessarily associated with faltering perceptions. International Relations theory posits that there are instances where rivals may be rationally "compelled" to escalate. Rivals could, for instance, find themselves in a position to detect "windows of opportunity" or threatening trends in relative capability terms which they could try to benefit from or tackle, respectively, before they cease to exist or became irreversible. In this manner, a declining state will have an incentive to prevent the rising state from acquiring more power and the rising state will be inclined to forcefully advance its interests.[23]

After all, an improved "understanding" of the other does not eliminate uncertainty over the motivations and the capabilities of the "other," rendering escalation a constant probability.[24] In the final analysis, perceptions may not be related at all to particular cases of conflict. Even in instances where biases can be shown to have contributed to escalation, one cannot be certain that the crisis itself was causally related to exacerbated misperceptions. Only a thorough assessment of the case study can clearly delineate the purported links, but from a research perspective, there seems to be no reason why escalation cannot have taken place in spite of more accurate leadership perceptions. Including, therefore crises which culminated in conflict does not weaken the research framework of the project.

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[23] Gilpin, R. (1981), *War and Change in International Politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 191.
[24] Fearon, J. (1995), "Rationalist Explanations for War," *International Organization*, 49:3, pp. 380-381.

6.4: Selected Case Studies and Attributes

Based on the logic and considerations presented in the previous section, three case studies were selected: A summary of the case studies selected is presented below.

6.4.1: Greece – Turkey: The 1996 Aegean Sea Crisis

In January 1996, Greece and Turkey, two NATO allies in South-Eastern Europe engaged in a militarized "bras de fer" over a set of uninhabited islets, called Imia,[25] located in the Aegean Sea. When a Turkish merchant vessel, the "Figen Akat", ran aground on one of these islets on December 25 1995, a set of events was set in motion that led the two countries to the brink of war in late January 1996. A diplomatic exchange between Athens and Ankara took place first, aiming at advancing the legal argumentation of both sides with regards to the ownership of the islets. Within a few days, the dispute made it to the Greek and Turkish mainstream media, causing a sense of anxiety in the general population and providing an opportunity to activists on both sides to exacerbate tensions.

During the crisis, journalists and citizens hoisted and removed the national flags of the two countries on the islets in highly sensationalized campaigns, broadcasted on state-owned television. It was only a matter of time before the crisis escalated, with the newly elected government in Athens eager to defend its claims. When a Greek Special Forces contingent was deployed on the largest of the Imia islets on January 28 1996, the final phase of the crisis was initiated. A major concentration of forces on the area brought the two fleets close to war, with Turkish troops landing on the smaller Imia islet. As Greece ordered a partial mobilization of

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[25] Turkey uses the name "Kardak" for the islets.

reserves, the tactical game in the dramatic, final hours of January 1996 led to the crash of a Greek helicopter and the death of its crew. The deadlock lasted until the morning hours of January 31, when a U.S. led mediating initiative allowed the two countries to remove all flags and forces from the operational theatre, effectively returning to the status quo ante.

6.4.2: Georgia – Russia: The 2008 South-Ossetian Crisis

On July 3 2008, Georgians and South Ossetians exchanged artillery fire after Dmitriy Sanakoyev, the head of the Georgian-appointed government in South Ossetia was injured by a roadside mine. The atmosphere was already tense in Tskhinvali, the de-facto capital of the secessionist Georgian province of South-Ossetia, because of a bomb attack in the preceding days that had led to the death of a local police officer. A low intensity conflict soon erupted in South Ossetian villages, which, by the end of July, had escalated to frequent skirmishes between Georgian security and South-Ossetian paramilitary forces. Violent incidents soon expanded to Tskhinvali until August 7, when Mikheil Saakashvili, the Georgian President, ordered the country's forces to launch a military operation in the break-away province. The aim was clear: Georgian forces would reassert governmental control over the entire province. Initially, the Georgian foray was successful, with the Georgian government announcing the capture of Tskhinvali on August 8.

In the meantime, however, Russia had launched a full-scale counter-offensive that soon expanded beyond the secessionist territory of South-Ossetia. Within a matter of days, Russian forces had pushed Georgian forces out of South Ossetia, opening a second front in the country's other separatist province of Abkhazia. Georgia's

defensive apparatus could not withstand the militarized pressure for long. On August 10, Georgia declared a ceasefire and begun withdrawing its forces from South Ossetia.

By that time, the Russian army had conducted major operations deep inside Georgian territory, inflicting substantial damage and casualties across major population centres. Georgian military bases and assets were either captured or destroyed and the country's infrastructure sustained heavy bombing by the Russian air-force. At the same time, more than 100,000 Georgians were displaced because of the conflict. The number of casualties on both sides remains, to this day, highly contested and unconfirmed. The war officially ended on August 12 2008, with the mutually agreed "six point plan", establishing a cease fire between Russia and Georgia with the mediation of the French President, Nikolas Sarkozy.

6.4.3: Cyprus – Turkey: The 1998 S-300 Missile Crisis

On January 4 1997, the governments of the Republic of Cyprus and the Russian Federation signed an agreement for the sale of the advanced S-300 PMU-1 Surface to Air Missile (SAM) system to Cyprus. A fierce reaction from Ankara set in motion a crisis that threatened stability in a geopolitically sensitive area for both the European Union and NATO. The Turkish response was initially confined to threats and warnings, with Tansu Ciller, the Turkish Foreign Minister, openly declaring that the Turkish air-force would destroy the SAMs if they were to reach Cypriot soil. Diplomats and political leaders, concerned with the escalatory dynamics, increased their visits to Ankara, Athens and Nicosia. Nevertheless, the stalemate persisted over what appeared to be a casus beli for the Turkish military

planners, emphasized by the Turkish use of the Cuban Missile Crisis analogy. As the Cypriot government insisted in the deployment of the missiles Turkish and Greek forces increased their military presence and activities in Cyprus, escalating to mock dogfights between Greek and Turkish F-16s over Cypriot skies.

Soon, large scale manoeuvres of Greek, Greek-Cypriot, Turkish and Turkish-Cypriot forces were taking place within the space of a few square kilometres, north and south of the de-facto border separating the two ethnic communities since 1974. In the meantime, the Russian government appeared eager to support the Republic, providing all means necessary to defend the missiles from a Turkish incursion. On the diplomatic front, UN-backed discussions between the Greeks and Turks of Cyprus ended in a stalemate during the first half of 1998, opening the door to the final stage of the crisis. By that time, militarized incidents had expanded in the entire Eastern Mediterranean region, arousing fears of a regional conflagration between Greece and Turkey, exacerbated by the potential of Russian involvement. A further escalation was averted in late December 1998, when the Cypriot President announced that the SAMs would be deployed on the Greek island of Crete, as opposed to being hosted on the purpose-built sites already constructed in Cyprus.

Chapter 7:

The 1996 Aegean Sea Crisis[1]

7.1: Introduction

In late January 1996, Greece and Turkey, two NATO allies with a long-standing history of conflict and on-going, simmering tensions, found themselves on the brink of war over a set of uninhabited islets in the Aegean Sea. Widely regarded as problematic, choices made during the crisis by Greek policymakers are considered a strategic blunder which led to a Greek withdrawal from the islets and subsequently a retrenchment regarding maritime jurisdiction issues in the Aegean. Numerous explanations for the Greek miscalculations have been suggested, focusing primarily on either the impact of the local media, or domestic political motivations in Athens, where ruling PASOK party members battled for the premiership. However, the main discourse regarding Greek miscalculations centers on explanations that may not shed light on the true dynamics of the crisis.

In this chapter, these predominant explanations are laid out and assessed, but a novel one is advanced. Specifically, I suggest that neither the sensationalist tones adopted by Greek media nor the belligerence of the nationalist faction within the Greek government can adequately account for the mismanagement of the crisis. To the extent that these elements were present, they may have only exacerbated the real problem, which was the extent of Greek misperceptions regarding Turkey's increased capabilities and changing security strategy in the Aegean Sea. While Greek policy planners had been made aware of Turkish goals and priorities,

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[1] The Aegean Sea crisis is widely referred to in Greek and international publications as the "Imia" islet crisis. The two names will be used interchangeably.

they still operated under obsolete perceptions during the ensuing crisis, thereby rendering the observed unfavorable outcome highly probable.

7.2: Historical Overview

The Greek-Turkish rivalry has persisted in varying intensity since the establishment of modern Greece in 1830. The 20th century was a tense period for Greek – Turkish relations. In the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Greece succeeded in expanding its territory vis-à-vis Turkey, whose retreat from the former Ottoman lands was de jure acknowledged by the Treaty of Sevres in 1920. In its attempt to consolidate its control over Asia Minor and integrate the remaining Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire within the country, Greece subsequently launched a disastrous campaign in Asia Minor which ended in 1922 with the permanent extinction of the Greek presence (numbering around 1.5 million at the time) from the region and the signing of the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, which, to this day defines bilateral relations to a substantial extent.[2]

Nevertheless, the two states remain in disagreement over a number of key issues including the delimitation of maritime borders along the Aegean Sea, minority rights and the Cyprus question which in 1974 brought the two NATO allies to the brink of full-scale war. Maritime jurisdiction in the Aegean Sea appears to be the most contentious issue at present, with disputes and incidents revolving around a maritime area with over 2,000 islands, islets, and rocks, mostly uninhabited, though important for defining borders. Turkey, in this regard, rejects the Greek

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[2] Jacobides, M. (2007), "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy: Lessons from a Near-War, *Organization Science*, 18:3, p. 460.

claim that islands in the Aegean are entitled to a continental shelf, as it considers these islands to constitute the geological extension of its Anatolian mainland.[3]

Finally, Greece's 10-mile long airspace is disputed by Ankara, leading to frequent dogfights over the Mediterranean skies. After the traumatic 1970s, which culminated in the partition of Cyprus, Greek policy makers monitor with concern what is perceived by Athens to be Turkey's revisionist approach, expressed through "violations of Greek airspace, refusal to submit the delimitation of the Aegean continental shelf to the International Court of Justice, threats of war in case of Greek extension of the territorial water limit from six to twelve miles and challenges of the Aegean status quo as codified by a number of international treaties."[4]

Irrespective of the legal, political and even geological argumentation presented by both sides, Greece's sense of vulnerability is not unwarranted from a geostrategic point of view. The distinctive geographic formation of the Hellenic territory, comprising a predominately mountainous mainland and an extensive coastline with hundreds of islands and islets, bestows the country's military planners with challenging operational parameters, while lacking the advantage of strategic depth enjoyed by Greece's historical rival, Turkey. Turkey, on the other hand, views Greek intentions with suspicion, as Greek islands, numerous and heavily militarized, are perceived to form a strategic "cordon sanitaire" around Turkey's Mediterranean coast, arousing fears of encirclement which could deprive the country of what it regards as its legitimate interests in the Aegean Sea and the

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[3] Bahcheli, T. (1990), *Greek-Turkish Relations Since 1955*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, pp.130-32.
[4] Dokos, T. (1998), "Greek Security Doctrine in the Post-Cold War Era", *Thesis: A Journal of Foreign Policy Issues*, Summer 1998, available at http://www.hri.org/MFA/thesis/summer98/security.html, [accessed 03/02/2014].

Eastern Mediterranean. After the end of the Cold War, Greek-Turkish disputes over the Aegean escalated to frequent diplomatic and militarised skirmishes, culminating in the 1996 crisis over the status of the Imia[5] islets.

Figure 7-A: The Aegean Sea

Source: Wikipedia

7.3: Crisis Background and Greek Perceptions

Greek-Turkish relations in the 1990s were characterized by volatility and political tensions, even though the two countries had not resorted to violence against each other since 1974. The advent of the post-Cold War period meant little for Greek strategists, as Turkey remained a prominent security consideration for Athens.

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[5] The Imia islets are called "Kardak" by Turkey.

Less than twenty years ago, after all, the two countries had fought over the island of Cyprus. In 1974, the political turmoil in Athens and the Greek defence apparatus reliance on land forces, in accordance with NATO operational priorities, rendered the country unable to muster an effective response against the Turkish forces deployed to Cyprus. The "Cypriot tragedy" as it is registered in the national narrative, acted as a catalyst for the democratization of the country. Within a few months, the Greek junta, which precipitated the Turkish operation in the first place, had been replaced by a democratically elected government.

Greece's security policy had to undergo an equally radical transition. Greek policy makers, shocked by the fact that a "NATO member, using NATO weapons, had taken 35,000 troops out of the NATO structure in order to occupy another democratic European country,"[6] moved to alter Greece's security strategy by upgrading the country's air and naval components, while emphasizing the forward deployment of forces in northern Greece (Thrace) and the Aegean islands. Greece's disillusionment with NATO would imply that from that point on, the country would rely on its own capabilities for deterrence and defence purposes.

Despite the effort to secure an adequate deterrent, the vulnerability of the Greek position persisted in the early 1990s, as the stalemate in bi-communal talks in Cyprus was leading to a consolidation of the Turkish military presence in the island with rising fears of an impending annexation of northern Cyprus by Turkey. At the same time, the existence of a sizable Muslim minority in Greek Thrace, in close proximity to the Turkish border, had created another potential flashpoint, which Athens proved fully incapable to control. More importantly, following the

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[6] Moustakis, F. and M. Sheehan (2000), "Greek Security Policy after the Cold War," *Contemporary Security Policy*, 21:3, p. 96.

end of the Cold War, Turkey undertook an extensive military modernization program at a time when both Russia and Western powers were scaling back their defence budgets in an effort to benefit from the so called "peace dividend."[7] Between 1990 and 1996, Turkey consistently devoted a higher percentage of its GDP compared to Greece to defence outlays, in spite of Turkey's impressive GDP growth rate during that period. Athens was unable to keep up. The Greek-Turkish arms race in the 1980s had taken its toll on the ailing Greek economy (in the 1980s, the average yearly growth rate of the Greek GDP had been 0.76 %.)[8] In the same decade, Greek defence spending averaged 6.11% of the country's GDP.[9]

Figure 7-B: Greek and Turkish Defence Spending 1987-2000

Defence Spending as % of GDP, 1987 - 2010

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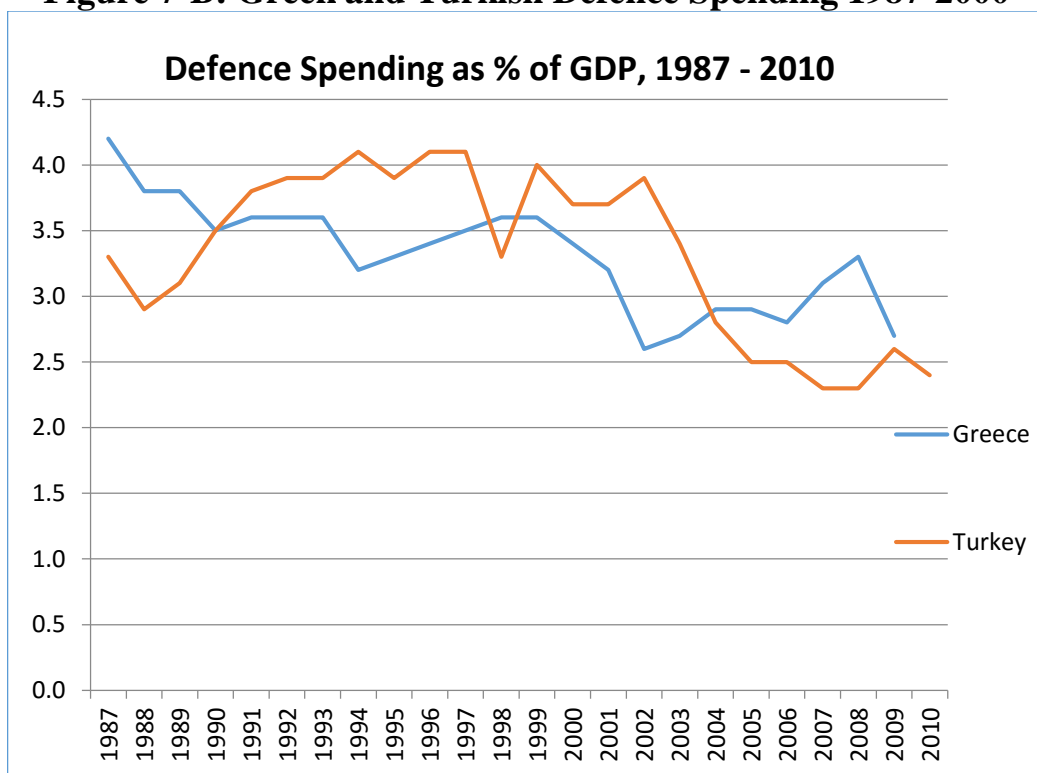
[7] Dokos, T. and N. Protonotarios (1996), *Turkish Military Power: The Challenge to Greek Security*, (in Greek), Athens: Tourikis Publishers, 2nd ed.

[8] Eurostat data, cited in Nicolaidou, E. (2008), "The Demand for Military Expenditure: Evidence from the EU15 (1961-2005)," *Defence and Peace Economics*, 19:4, p. 275.

[9] SIPRI data, cited in Nicolaidou, "The Demand for Military Expenditure," p. 276.

Athens was painfully aware of the growing capabilities gap: Washington's decision in 1995 to provide Turkey with KC-135 tanker aircraft and 120 army tactical missiles (ATACMs) was strongly protested by Athens, as it could further erode the 7:10 Greek-Turkish military balance in the Aegean, in existence since 1974,[10] in addition to increasing Turkey's strike range capacity fourfold.[11] In December 1995, shortly before the Imia crisis, the Greek delegation in the high-level E.U. Intergovernmental Conference maintained that the Greek borders should be defended by the Union's Common Foreign and Security Policy, as they constitute the borders of the E.U. Athens had also requested (informally) from the U.S. government to guarantee the maintenance of the status quo in the Aegean, without securing a positive response.[12]

While the stalemate in Cyprus persisted, in March 1995 Greece accepted the accession of Turkey in the E.U. Customs Union. This acquiescence did not reflect an improvement in bilateral relations, but was part of an intra-European negotiation between Greece and Brussels. Greece aimed at securing Cyprus's membership candidate status at a time when certain E.U. member states expressed their reluctance to "internalize" what was in essence viewed as a frozen conflict. The Yugoslavian conflagration was casting a long shadow over the Maastricht vision of a common European foreign policy and E.U. leaders were understandably cautious of further weakening the Union's credibility by being involved in another ethnic conflict along the continent's frontier.

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[10] The 7:10 military balance referred to Greek vs Turkey naval and aerial assets and was a widely accepted cornerstone of Greek security policy following the 1974 Cyprus conflict.
[11] Athanassopoulou, E. (1997), "Blessing in disguise? The Imia crisis and Turkish-Greek relations," *Mediterranean Politics*, 2:3, p. 78.
[12] Ibid, p. 79.

On May 31 1995, the Greek parliament ratified the 1982 U.N. Convention on the Law of the Sea which includes, under Article 3, the stipulation that "every State has the right to establish the breadth of its territorial sea up to a limit not exceeding 12 nautical miles." While both Greece and Turkey claim 6 nautical mile (n.m.) territorial seas in the Aegean, the prospect of Greece claiming a 12 n.m. continental shelf alarmed Ankara. In June 1995, Turkey's parliament declared that it would consider a decision by Greece to extend its territorial waters beyond the six n.m. as an act of war (casus belli).[13] That move raised the alarm, as it was a clear indication that Turkey was willing to escalate if Greece exercised its rights.

From a strategic point of view, Turkey's frustration was not unwarranted. If Greece were to expand its territorial waters to 12 n.m., Turkey's share in the Aegean would increase from 7.5% to 8.8%, whereas Greece's share would almost double, from 43.5% to 71.5% (figure 7-C). Moustakis and Sheehan correctly note that "The current situation creates three high-seas corridors across the Aegean that permit Turkish vessels departing east-coast ports, such as Ismir and Kusadasi, to reach the Mediterranean without having to transit Greek waters."[14] Considering, among others, that the Aegean Sea may be holding substantial deposits of hydrocarbons, Turkey's policy makers viewed a potential application of UNCLOS provisions by Greece as a direct threat against the country's interests.

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[13] General Assembly of the Turkish Parliament, June 8 1995.The declaration cited the 1923 Lausanne Treaty as well as Turkey's vital interests and authorised the government to take all necessary measures, should Greece unilaterally extend its territorial waters beyond six nautical miles.

[14] Moustakis and Sheehan, "Greek security policy after the cold war," p. 98.

**Figure 7-C: Comparison of 6 n.m.
and 12 n.m. continental shelves**
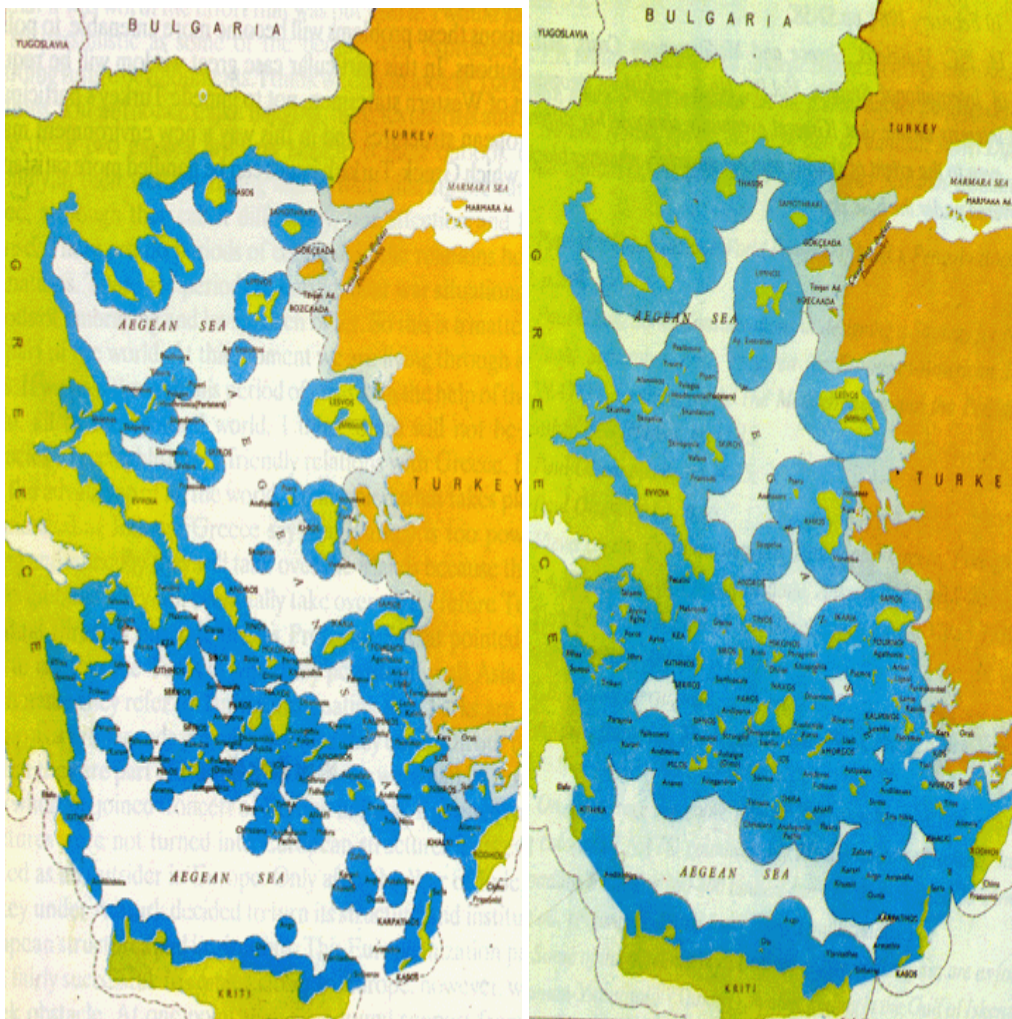
Turkish political and military figures made sure that the Greek leadership received

a series of clear signals regarding their opposition to the expansion of Greece's

continental shelf. Officials reiterated the casus belli in numerous circumstances,

while the commander of the Turkish navy, Admiral Erkayia, took a further step,

indicating that should Greece proceed with an expansion of its territorial waters,

Turkey would consider seizing some of the Greek islands adjacent to the Turkish

mainland.[15] The message was deemed credible by Greek intelligence. In the second half of 1995, Admiral Lymperis, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, informed the Defence Minister of his estimate that Turkey was gradually adopting a more assertive military posture in the Aegean Sea, a stance connected with the issue of the delineation of the continental shelf between the two countries.[16]

There is additional evidence that available intelligence provided a relatively accurate picture of Turkish intentions before the onset of the crisis. This is corroborated by retired Lieutenant-General Nikolaos Gryllakis, who on October 1995, informed the Greek Defence Minister of his assessment regarding the current situation in the Aegean Sea. Gryllakis, acting as an unofficial advisor, suggested that the international climate did not favour a direct invasion of Greek islands, but the Turks would rather see, for the time being, an "economic partition" of the Aegean.[17] It is safe to assume that Gryllakis referred to the maritime jurisdiction issues, as in public international law, the continental shelf concept is directly related to the exploitation of maritime resources.

The Greek political establishment was apparently informed of Turkey's strategic recalibrations and "Greek diplomats knew that in Ankara certain circles had been promoting the theory of "grey zones."" Ankara would, according to the "grey zones" paradigm, attempt to challenge the sovereignty status of Aegean "geographical formations" (including islands, islets or rocks) not referred to explicitly in international treaties.[18] Only a few days before the onset of the crisis,

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[15] "Tension Riding High in the Aegean," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 8:3, p. 120.

[16] Lymperis, C. (2001), *Steering Course in Turbulent Seas*, (in Greek), Athens: Poiotita, p. 551.

[17] Assessment submitted to the Greek Minister for Defence, 19 October 1995, cited in Dimitrakis, P. (2008), "Intelligence for Crisis Management: the case of the January 1996 Greek-Turkish Crisis," *European Security*, 17:4, p. 458.

[18] Interview of Ambassador (ret.) Dimitrios Nezeritis, 8 December 2004; Interview with former Minister of Foreign Affairs Theodoros Pangalos, cited in "The Files," Mega Channel TV, (in Greek), aired on 06/02/2001.

a National Intelligence Agency (NIS) station intercepted a phone conversation of the Turkish Navy Chief, Admiral Erkayia, who allegedly asserted that the "grey zones" strategy was his idea from the days of his service as Chief of the Fleet, having assigned a special task force to substantiate Turkish claims over islets in the Aegean Sea.[19] According to Greek intelligence, the admiral claimed that when he sent this study to the Turkish General Staff, "they adopted it instantly."[20]

The Greek government indicated that it understood the political and legal connotations of the Turkish strategy and tried to formulate an appropriate response. In November 1995, the Greek Ministries of Defence and of the Aegean introduced a joint development program aimed at uninhabited islands and islets.[21] While the economic and ecological dimensions of this initiative were not negligible, the political and legal dimensions of this undertaking were obvious. According to international law provisions, islands and islets capable of sustaining "human habitation or economic life" are entitled to a continental shelf.[22]

As the end of 1995 approached, the Greek Defence Minister, Gerasimos Arsenis, indicated to various media outlets that Turkey could try to take advantage of the domestic political turmoil in Greece and commit a "provocation" around the scheduled appointment of the new Greek Prime Minister.[23] Andreas Papandreou (the elected Prime Minister) had been hospitalized since November 1995 and his deteriorating condition had exacerbated uncertainty domestically, as the various factions of the ruling Socialist PASOK party battled for the premiership.

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[19] "What Happened during the Imia Crisis Night," *To Vima* Sunday ed., 13/11/2005.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ministry of the Aegean, "Islets Preservation and Protection Project," 1995, cited in Dimitrakis, "Intelligence for Crisis Management," p. 456.
[22] Article 121 of the Law of the Sea Convention (UNCLOS).
[23] Dimitrakis, "Intelligence for Crisis Management," p. 456.

The power vacuum in Athens was relatively short-lived. Papandreou's resignation on November 15 paved the way for Costas Simitis, a moderate former Law Professor to become Greece's new Prime Minister, a position he held until 2004. Simitis won the party nomination by a narrow margin, with Gerasimos Arsenis, the Defense Minister as the third runner-up. Simitis secured the majority of party votes and formed a new government on January 21, 1996. Gerasimos Arsenis retained his office, despite simmering tensions with Simitis and persisting distrust among all premiership candidates. The almost seamless transition to a new government, a historically rare phenomenon for the country, would coincide with a major security incident. The new government would soon be called to manage a crisis that would set the tone in Greek-Turkish affairs for the following years.

7.4: The Crisis

On December 25 1995, the Turkish merchant vessel Figen Akat ran aground on Great Imia, the biggest (18 sq. miles) of the three Imia group of islets in the south-east Aegean Sea. The Great Imia is an uninhabited islet that lies 2 nautical miles from the Greek islet of Kalolimnos and 3.65 nautical miles off the Turkish coast. The Turkish captain refused any assistance from the Greek coastguard, arguing that the ship was in Turkish territorial waters where Greek authorities had no jurisdiction. He also added that had the right to seek the help of Turkish tractors for the detachment of his boat. The following day, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs was informed of the incident which did not receive publicity.[24] On December 27, the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted the ship to be

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[24] Jacobides, "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy," p. 461.

towed by Greek tractors, but emphasized to Greek diplomats that the incident warranted further discussion.[25] Two days later, the Turkish MFA delivered a verbal note to the Greek ambassador in which it stated that "… the Kardak islets constitute a part of the Turkish territory."

The response of the Greek embassy came on January 9, suggesting that there was nothing to discuss: the legal status of the islet was clear, postulated by the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne and a 1932 agreement between Italy and Turkey which settled the status of the Dodecanese islands (ceded to Greece).[26] In Article 15 of the Treaty of Lausanne, Turkey surrendered to Italy "all rights and title over the following islands: Stampalia, Rhodes, Calki, Scarpanto, Casos, Piscopis, Misiros, Calimnos, Lipsos, Simi, and Cos, which are now occupied by Italy, and the islets dependent thereon."[27] With the 1947 Treaty following the end of WWII, Italy ceded sovereignty over the twelve Dodecanese islands and adjacent islets to Greece. The next few days saw an intense diplomatic exchange between Athens and Ankara which made its way to the Greek press on January 20 1996, the eve of the inauguration of the newly appointed Greek government.[28] The preceding day, the Greek General Staff had ordered high ranking officers to review existing contingency plans "towards re-capturing the islets."[29]

In the following days, the Imia issue became sensationally publicized in both countries, causing a sense of anxiety in the public sphere and providing an opportunity to a number of journalists, political figures and activists from both

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[25] Kourkoulas, A. (1998), *Imia: A Critical Approach of the Turkish Factor*, (in Greek), Athens: Sideris, pp. 28-29.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Hurewitz, J. (ed.) (1956), *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record, Vol. 2: 1914-56*, Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, p. 120.
[28] Jacobides, "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy," p. 460.
[29] Lymperis, *Steering Course in Turbulent Seas*, p. 540.

countries to exacerbate tensions. A Greek flag was placed by a group of Greek citizens on the Great Imia only to be replaced two days later by the Turkish flag when a Hurriyet (Turkish daily newspaper) crew landed on the islet on January 27. The broadcast of this incident ignited sentiments among Greeks in the run up to the final phase of the crisis which begun the following morning, when a Greek patrol boat was ordered to remove the Turkish flag and (re)hoist the Greek flag in its place. A Greek Special Forces detachment was deployed concurrently on the Great Imia to ensure that the flag was not removed. The following evening (January 29), the Turkish National Security Council was convened, during which Prime Minister Tansu Ciller demanded the evacuation of the Greek forces from the islets and the lowering of the Greek flag, asserting that Turkey was ready to use force if Greece did not remove all troops and flags from the islet.

The Greek military had already begun to increase its presence around the islets at that point.[30] The operational aspects of the crisis were handled primarily by Admiral Lymperis, an influential figure in the Greek military establishment who, on January 29, insisted that a naval task force be dispatched to the area, a request endorsed by the Greek Defence Minister. On January 30, the Greek MoD reported that "the entire Greek fleet is sailing in the Aegean".[31] The Greek task force, comprised of frigates, destroyers and submarines constituted admittedly a disproportionate response relative to the Turkish forces present in the area, risking further escalation. On the same day, Greek infantry units in northern Greece (near

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[30] Giallouridis, C. (1997), "The Greek-Turkish Conflict from Cyprus to Imia, 1955-1996: The View from the Side of the Press, (in Greek), Athens: Sideris, p. 317.
[31] "Greece and Turkey: The Rocky Islet Crisis," Congressional Research Service Report, 96:140, 1996, Foreign Affairs and National Defense Division, United States Congress, p. 2.

the Greek-Turkish border) and the Dodecanese islands were put on alert while reservists from nearby islands received draft notices.[32]

According to reports coming from Nicosia, Turkish Cypriot armed forces were ordered to assume positions close to the Green Line, the de-facto border separating the two communities.[33] While the Greek Army requested the Cypriot National Guard to order a general mobilization, the Cypriot President did not proceed accordingly, as he feared that this would destabilize the situation in the island.[34] In the main operational theater around the Imia islets, Turkey positioned a substantial naval force, (reports suggest that as many as twenty ships in total from both countries were in proximity, including frigates, corvettes and missile boats), though there were no signs of a troop mobilization underway in Turkey.

When information regarding an impending Turkish takeover of another islet reached Greek authorities (from a Greek American lobbyist in Washington) in the early morning hours of January 31, Admiral Lymperis assessed the conditions to be "favorable for a military counter-surprise" and at 01:02 (Athens time), ordered the Navy General Staff "to acquire targets among the Turkish Fleet vessels in the Aegean."[35] In the meantime, Greek forces had been ordered to respond only if fired upon or in case of an attempt by Turkish forces to land on any of the Imia islets. At 4.59am, a Greek AB 212 reconnaissance helicopter confirmed that a Turkish commando team had been deployed on the (unguarded) smaller Imia islet. A Greek contingent was scheduled to be deployed on the same islet earlier but failed to do so for technical reasons.

[32] Lymperis, *Steering Course in Turbulent Seas*, p. 536.
[33] Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation, 31/01/1996.
[34] "Clerides was looking for Simitis without Success (in Greek)," *Simerini* daily, 12/12/2014.
[35] Lymperis, *Steering Course in Turbulent Seas*, p. 569.

A few minutes later, the Greek helicopter reported mechanical failure and the Greek frigate Navarino notified Athens that it was unable to locate it. The wreckage of the helicopter was spotted later on the same day. The Greek Ministry of Defence finally decided not to dispatch the commandos on the small Imia so as to avoid escalation.[36] By 6.00am, Greek and Turkish forces had agreed to disengage and remove all flags from the islets following a series of telephone discussions initiated by Washington in which disengagement was agreed, mainly through the mediation of Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Richard Holbrooke and Greek-American lobbyist Philip Christopher. The mutual withdrawal was complete within two hours.

7.5: The Origins of Greek Misperceptions

There is a strong consensus shared among analysts that the Greek political and military establishment mismanaged the crisis. A low-level incident led to an escalation by the Greek military and the deployment of a major naval force in a flashpoint that could have led to open warfare between two NATO allies. Greek defence planners, moreover, failed to anticipate the Turkish initiative to seize the adjacent islet, appearing confused as to what the Turkish actions would be throughout the crisis. A further escalation was averted, mainly due to the mediation of external actors, but the fact remains that this incident registered Turkish claims in the Aegean Sea and compromised the credibility of Greek deterrence. After the crisis, the understanding was that the extension of the country's continental shelf would not be feasible in the current environment. The

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[36] Jacobides, "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy," p. 462.

rather inexplicable nature of Greek actions during the crisis render an assessment of Greek in-crisis perceptions necessary and analytically useful.

Interestingly, the Greek political and military leadership maintained a set of perceptions which appears to be consistent with pre-crises assumptions. On January 29, the Greek General Staff concluded that "the Turks are raising the stakes in the Imia dispute, an issue added to the rest of the challenges. Their goal is to force us to bilateral negotiations."[37] It is important to note that this estimate came at a point when the press across both sides of the Aegean was playing the nationalist card. In spite of sensationalist tones adopted by mainstream media, however, Greek decision-makers did not adopt the more alarmist beliefs regarding the aims of the Turkish side. On January 26, the Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pangalos asserted that Turkey did not aim at seizing Greek territory, but would use the status of an islet in a calculated way to acquire foreign policy gains.[38] Nevertheless, questions regarding the counter-productive management of the crisis by Greek policy makers remain. Why did Greek political and military leaders choose to escalate during a situation which necessitated restraint and caution? It is no coincidence that even members of the Turkish government were wondering why Athens appeared so keen to escalate the crisis.[39]

A simple answer may have been provided by another influential Greek military figure of the 1990s: Major General Dimou asserted that Admiral Lymperis's initiative (to dispatch the fleet near the Imia islet flashpoint) was consistent with the Greek Navy's operational doctrine of "deploying a superior force in a

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[37] Lymperis, Steering Course in Turbulent Seas, p. 555.
[38] Hickok, M. (1998), "The Imia/Kardak affair, 1995-96: A case of inadvertent conflict," *European Security*, 7:4, p. 125.
[39] Kourkoulas, *Imia: A Critical Approach of the Turkish Factor*, p. 40.

particular time and place", suggesting that the Greek Navy sought to acquire first strike capability within its operational theatre.[40] On the early hours of January 31, admiral Lymperis asserted to senior officers present in the command center: "We are very close to confrontation. Prepare for war. I declare a condition of preparedness for surprise attack".[41] The very fact that Greece had ceded the management of the crisis from January 28 to the Navy (as opposed to maintaining it under the control of the less militarized Coast Guard) was a sharply escalatory step which admittedly sent a clear and resolute signal to Turkey. The deployment of a substantial naval force and the ensuing partial mobilization of reserves completed the picture of an almost automated response, all in spite of accurate intelligence and converging assessments of Turkish security policy priorities.

Indeed, the Greek Navy's response was compatible with the wider Greek security strategy which had been articulated in official policy documents. Admiral Lymperis admitted that "We had, in 1995, a scenario in our crisis handling handbook about an invasion on uninhabited islets; this provided for recapturing the islet, taking off the foreign flag, and hoisting the Greek flag".[42] The political leadership was not unaware of the military's operational philosophy. In the 1995 Ministry of Defence White Paper, it is clearly stated that the "ultimate goal" of the Greek security strategy is to provide the Greek armed forces with the capacity to not only undertake defensive operations when attacked, but to also be able to "transfer the war in the enemy's territory".[43]

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[40] Major-General (ret.) Dimitrios Dimou interview, 19/12/2004, cited in Dimitrakis, "Intelligence for Crisis Management," p. 469.
[41] Madras, K. (2005), *Preludes of War: From the September Pogrom to the Imia Crisis*, (in Greek), Athens: Pontiki Editions, p. 372.
[42] Lymperis, *Steering Course in Turbulent* Seas, p. 559.
[43] Hellenic Ministry of Defence White Paper, Athens, 1995, p. 23.

Overall, it is entirely possible that the Greek political and military apparatus may have been aware of changing priorities in Ankara. The two long-term rivals, after all, commit a substantial amount of resources in acquiring and analyzing information and intelligence from the other side of the Aegean. Nevertheless, for some reason this information did not appear to have been properly evaluated and operationalized by Greek policy planners. As a result, Greece produced a response which was more appropriate to bilateral crises in the 1970s and 1980s and which ultimately proved ineffective.

7.6: Managing the Previous Crisis?

The Greek security strategy before 1996, as suggested, placed an emphasis on escalation and the demonstration of resolve which would prevent (or revert) any territorial gains by Turkey in the event of conflict. The rationale was that in case of war, Turkey would be in a position to acquire further territorial gains in Cyprus, nullifying any successful undertakings by Greek forces in the Aegean and/or Thrace.[44] However, a successful deterrence strategy, particularly in cases where there is little scope for "deterrence by denial,"[45] requires the challenger to perceive the deterrer as both capable and willing to retaliate.[46] With a widening capabilities gap, Greece's deterrence credibility had been steadily eroding throughout the latter half of the 20th century, necessitating increasingly robust demonstrations of resolve. The existence, in geostrategic terms, of multiple possibilities for a fait-

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[44] Papasotiriou, H. (1993), "Grand Strategy: Greek options in the new international environment," (in Greek), The Society for Social and Economic Studies, available at http://www.ekome.gr/english/default.asp, [accessed 09/04/2014].

[45] Deterrence by denial renders the success of a challenger's offensive unachievable or prohibitively costly.

[46] For a discussion on deterrence see Schelling, T. (1960), *The Strategy of Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; Zagare, F. (2004), "Foundations of Deterrence Theory: A Re-Examination of the Logical Foundations of Deterrence Theory," *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 16:2, pp. 107-141.

accompli by Turkey, combined with the near-absence of potential territorial gains by Greek forces in the event of conflict[47] complicated the projection of deterrence credibility. Greek deterrence was further weakened as Turkey's economic growth enabled it to overhaul and expand its military capabilities. By the mid-1990s, Turkey was in possession of NATO's second largest armed forces.

However, demonstrating the country's preparedness to escalate if necessary had become the pillar of Greece's security posture and had proven effective when put to the test. In early 1987, a Greek-Turkish war was only averted when the Greek Prime Minister publicly committed to sink Sismik, a Turkish survey vessel, if it continued its route towards Greek territorial waters.[48] In what was the most dramatic Greek-Turkish crisis between 1974 and 1996, the entire Greek naval fleet was deployed in a demonstration of resolve, aimed at deterring the Turkish fleet from crossing into Greek territory.[49] The particular crisis, considered to have been successfully managed by the Greek government, was a catalyst for a temporary détente between Greece and Turkey, spearheaded by Greek Prime Minister George Papandreou and his Turkish counterpart Turgut Ozal, embodied by the Davos declaration, signed in January 1988 at the World Economic Forum.[50]

Therefore, while Greek perceptions of Turkey's intention to establish its claims over the Aegean Sea were accurate, crisis management in Athens was still

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[47] With the potential exception of the heavily militarized Greek-Turkish border and the Turkish-administered islands of Gökçeada (Imvros) and Bozcaada (Tenedos).

[48] Related to Schelling's understanding of deterrence as "competition in risk-taking", the credibility of the deterrer can be enhanced by costly signals. Costly signals are actions and statements that increase 1) the risk of conflict and 2) the cost of retreating from a deterrent threat, thereby revealing the level of a country's commitment to defend against an attack. Such actions involve "setting afoot an activity that may get out of hand, initiating a process that carries some risk of unintended disaster" (Schelling, T. (1966), *Arms and influence*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 9.)

[49] Dimitrakis, P. (2007), "Greek Military Intelligence and the Turkish Threat during the 1987 Aegean Crisis," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 25:1, pp. 99-127.

[50] Önis, Z. and Ş. Yilmaz (2008), "Greek-Turkish Rapprochement: Rhetoric or Reality?," *Political Science Quarterly,* 123:1, p. 124.

operating under an obsolete set of calculations. The preceding crises of 1974 (culminating in a brief Greek-Turkish conflict over Cyprus) and 1987 (when Greece threatened openly with war should Turkey proceed with its seismic exploration activities in the Aegean Sea) depended upon the notion that deterrence was contingent on escalation and robust demonstrations of resolve. A reputation for resolve provides leverage in crises, as threats by previously resolute leaders are unlikely to be dismissed as bluffs, making enemies more likely to capitulate.[51]

In the Imia crisis, the new Greek Prime Minister probably hoped to take advantage of Greece's post-1974 track record, which indicated that the country was prepared to escalate. However, this strategy could no longer be effective; the capabilities gap, on the one hand, had reached a historical high point, providing Turkey with a degree of confidence regarding its prospects in the event of a full-scale conflict. On the other hand, the complex nature of the maritime dispute with Greece had opened the door to a new operational approach by Ankara, emboldened by the increasing technological and training sophistication of its armed forces.

Issues of jurisdiction across maritime routes mattered greatly to Turkey, a country that regarded itself as a rising Eastern Mediterranean naval power, which sought the acknowledgement and recognition of its neighbours, rather than the acquisition of a Greek island or islet. The new Turkish understanding of its rivalry with Greece implied that a direct invasion (a long standing concern among Greek policymakers) was giving way to a politico-military attrition strategy aimed at gains in the diplomatic arena. Moreover, Turkey had just agreed to join the E.U. Customs Union (December 31, 1995) and at that point sought vigorously to be

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[51] See Mercer, J. (1996), *Reputation and International Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

nominated an accession candidate country.[52] Following years of negotiations and adjustments, it now relied on Greece's green light as well (each E.U. member possesses veto powers in core issue areas such as E.U. membership) in order to take the next step in its engagement with the Union, including the release of much needed structural funds from Brussels (Turkey's per capita GDP stood at 5,682 USD (PPP) in 1995, which classifies it as a low to mid income country).

It is safe to assume that a Turkish attack on an E.U. member state would put an end to its prospects to join the Union, adversely impacting the country's modernization momentum. This would also come at a moment when Turkey faced a number of serious security threats; the Kurdish question, the rise of Islamism within the country as well as ongoing tensions with Syria, had created a heated atmosphere in Ankara, threatening to derail the country's recently impressive political and economic track record.

Overall, while there is no evidence that the "grey zones" paradigm was an official Turkish security doctrine in 1996, Greek policy-makers shared a common (and accurate) conception of changing Turkish priorities. Both intelligence and political estimates in Athens converged on the nature of Turkish goals. Nevertheless, the nuanced and systematic manner in which these would affect Turkey's military conduct in the Aegean were not properly assessed before the 1996 crisis. As a result, Greece's response to the crisis was contradictory, reflecting obsolete considerations and resultantly compromised Greek interests.

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[52] Bayar, M. and A. Kotelis (2014), "Democratic Peace or Hegemonic Stability? The Imia/Kardak Case," *Turkish Studies*, 15:2, p. 246.

7.7: The Relevance of Domestic Factors

The Aegean Sea crisis was both initiated and escalated as soon as the press exposed the ship and flag incidents respectively. The role of the press in the crisis provided for an alternative explanation, one that renders nationalistic media on both sides of the Aegean responsible for the escalation, if not for the creation, of the crisis.[53] Indeed, the advent of the "CNN effect" in the late Cold War period enabled political scientists such as Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow to suggest that the media may bear an impact on decision-making.[54] And this particular crisis was an instance where the media undoubtedly affected crisis dynamics, with Turkish journalists lowering the Greek and hoisting the Turkish flag in Imia.

Both governments, moreover, appeared to be vulnerable to media and popular pressure at the time. When the crisis erupted, the Greek government was newly appointed, following months of political limbo during the hospitalization of former Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou. The new government, led by the moderate academic Costas Simitis, was trying to establish itself in the domestic political scene, while Turkey was recovering from an inconclusive national election held in December 1995, with competing parties unable to agree on a coalition government. Finally, a number of researchers examined media and political attitudes during the crisis, concluding that "except for few and ineffective calls for calmness, democratic actors, especially the media and opposition parties, asked for tougher military measures against the other country."[55]

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[53] Jacobides, "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy," p. 465.
[54] Allison, G. and P. Zelikow (1999), *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis,* New York, NY: Addison-Wesley, 2nd ed.
[55] Bayar and Kotelis, "Democratic Peace or Hegemonic Stability?," p. 249.

Bayar and Kotelis examined the Greek press in depth, citing popular centre-left (To Vima) and center-right (Kathimerini and Eleftheros Typos) newspapers and suggested that "The immediate involvement of the media contributed to the sharp escalation of the crisis. The reports on the news were blended with nationalism and chauvinism that exacerbated enemy images and portrayed the other side as a villain state. Subsequently, an impression was created that the crisis was a zero-sum game and that even the slightest tactical retreat would mean significant gains for the other side."[56] This depiction of the Greek press is adequately accurate, with media on both sides of the Aegean emphasizing the aggressiveness of the "other"[57], though a small number of Greek media (such as the left-leaning Eleftherotypia) downplayed the severity of the crisis, emphasizing the importance of diplomatic efforts underway and a resolution based on international law.[58]

Nevertheless, this line of thinking cannot account for the change of Greek policy after the end of the crisis, despite the escalation of aggressive media offerings. Indeed, if "aggressive" and "chauvinistic" media played a pivotal role in shaping leadership perceptions during the crisis, then one can only wonder why this was not the case in the aftermath of the crisis. The Greek media's reaction following the disengagement of the Greek Navy and the withdrawal of the Greek flag was fierce. The popularity of the new Greek Prime Minister dropped from 80% only two days before the crisis to 36%.[59] However, Greece's cautious posture towards Turkey in the ensuing months did not give in to either popular or media pressure, despite being initially supported by a minority of the electorate and treated with

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[56] Ibid, p. 248.
[57] See for example *Adesmeftos Typos* daily, 26/01/1996; *Hurriet* daily, 31/01/1996.
[58] See for example *Eleftherotypia* daily, 30/01/1996.
[59] Jacobides, "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy," p. 462.

scepticism, if not hostility, by mainstream media. Finally, it was already suggested that the perceptions of the Greek leadership appeared largely unchanged regarding the specific political and legal motivations of Turkey. There is no evidence to suggest that Greek decision makers viewed Turkey's goals under a different prism at any stage during, or in the aftermath of, the Aegean Sea crisis.

Another plausible explanation for the mismanagement of the crisis by the Greek side is related to the country's domestic political dynamics. This explanation would render the particular crisis an episode of brinkmanship. According to Thomas Schelling, brinkmanship is "a technique of compellation which creates a usually shared risk."[60] While the new government in Athens was led by moderate Costas Simitis, his cabinet was largely controlled by hardliners who were not only suspicious of Turkish activities, but also sought an opportunity to overthrow Simitis and assume control of the party and the government. Led by Defence Minister Gerasimos Arsenis, this block allegedly hijacked the decision-making process, bringing about an escalation aimed at serving the political interests of the nationalist PASOK faction.[61]

Finally, one could also entertain the possibility that Simitis himself would benefit from an escalation in Greek-Turkish affairs. Weak administrations are also considered vulnerable to the temptation of brinkmanship crises which may be employed to consolidate their hold on power.[62] The diversionary war hypothesis, more specifically, suggests that leaders who face problems domestically may

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[60] Schelling, *Arms and Influence*, p. 91.
[61] Hickok, "The Imia/Kardak affair, 1995-96," p. 119.
[62] Lebow, R. (1985), "The Deterrence Deadlock: Is There A Way Out?," in R. Jervis et. al. (1985), *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, pp. 180-181.

undertake adventurous foreign policies that they would not otherwise pursue.[63]

Even if their adventurism fails, the logic posits that leaders may still be tempted to pursue such a course of action, as long they anticipate that they will be removed from office anyway. The diversionary war paradigm implies that domestic political considerations drive the formation of foreign policy but the relationship may be more complicated. In fact, leaders may both "care" about state interests and their own political survival.[64] For this reason, a leader could benefit from a crisis he did not himself initiate to advance his personal goals.

There is little supportive evidence for any of the aforementioned scenarios. A detailed scrutiny in the aftermath of the crisis revealed that the main political decision makers during the crisis were the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister and the Defence Minister, as verified by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[65] At no point did any of the protagonists indicate disapproval of the steps taken to escalate the crisis. More importantly, all initiatives taken by the Greek side were in accordance with existing military plans, which had been endorsed by the previous administration. In fact, hard-liners or nationalists within the PASOK government had little to do with the steps that escalated the crisis. Initially, it was the Greek Foreign Minister, Theodoros Pangalos, who publicly confirmed the standoff in the Imia islets during a radio news interview on January 26.[66]

Pangalos's rhetoric had been far from diplomatic in certain instances but it can be safely said that his standing in the government and the ruling party was, in the

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[63] Hess, G. and A. Orphanides (1995), "War Politics: An Economic, Rational Voter Framework," *American Economic Review*, 85:4, pp. 828-846.

[64] Smith, A. (1998), "International Crises and Domestic Politics," *The American Political Science Review*, 92:3, pp. 623-638.

[65] Lymperis, *Steering Course in Turbulent Seas*.

[66] Greek state-owned radio (ERA), 26/01/1996, cited in Hickok, "The Imia/Kardak affair, 1995-96," p. 125.

context of the new administration, firm and satisfactory on a personal level. At the same time, Pangalos exerted strenuous diplomatic efforts in an attempt to defuse tensions, while during the course of the crisis he tried to publicly downplay the seriousness of the incident.[67] In the final hours of the crisis, it was Pangalos who suggested the withdrawal of Greek warships and subsequently the withdrawal of the Greek flag.[68] Furthermore, there is no evidence of any kind of debate between "hawks" and "doves" or any disagreement for that matter among Greek actors prior to the dramatic hours that led to the resolution of the crisis. Meanwhile, the moderate Greek Prime Minister, Costas Simitis handled the crisis in an assertive manner, reflecting a consensus among cabinet members. On January 29, Simitis stated that "Greece's response will be strong, direct, and effective. Greece has the means and will not hesitate to use them."[69]

This was not mere rhetoric: the partial mobilization on the evening of January 29 could not have taken place without the consent of the Greek Prime Minister. The press conference held in Athens on the following day took place after a cabinet meeting led by Prime Minister Simitis. During the press conference, the Greek government sent a clear signal that it was ready to further militarize the dispute with Athens rejecting any proposals for mediation by the EU, the UN or NATO.[70] Throughout the crisis, the Greek military handled the situation in accordance with procedures and parameters set by the political leadership. In the final hours of the crisis, Admiral Lymperis suggested to dispatch troops to engage the Turkish commandos who had landed in the smaller islet. This is when the Greek political

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[67] See for instance *To Vima* Sunday ed., 28/01/1996.
[68] Jacobides, "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy," p. 462.
[69] Ibid, p. 463.
[70] Hickok, "The Imia/Kardak affair, 1995-96," p. 129.

leadership diverged from the course set by the Greek military, indicating that the options presented by Lymperis and his staff were politically unacceptable.[71]

7.8: The Aftermath: Adapting to a New Environment

The prospects for stability in Greek-Turkish relations looked grim following the end of the Imia crisis. Not only did the incident end in a stalemate that further undermined the status quo in the Aegean Sea, but it also engendered an aggressive media coverage and a political furore in Athens. In his excellent timeline of the crisis, Jacobides explores some of the headlines in the Greek mainstream press on the following days: "And now? What do we do if Turkey strikes again?" wondered the pro-government Eleftherotypia, whereas Kathimerini bitterly commented on "Small (leaders) in vital times: No one felt the obligation to resign after the national defeat they led us into."[72]

The reputations of the political and military leadership were tarnished. The Greek chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was unceremoniously dismissed while questions were raised in the Greek parliament and media regarding the lowering of the Greek flag in Imia and the non-military response to the Turkish incursion on the smaller islet. Opposition leader Miltiades Evert asserted that that the withdrawal of the Greek flag constituted an abandonment of national territory and should be considered an act of treason.[73] The Greek government also viewed the

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[71] In a Greek state-owned radio (ERA) broadcast (31/01/1996), Defence Minister Arsenis confirmed that the decision to withdraw was only based on political criteria, hinting that it should be attributed to Simitis and/or Pangalos.
[72] Jacobides, "The Inherent Limits of Organizational Structure and the Unfulfilled Role of Hierarchy," p. 462.
[73] "The return of the Barons," *To Vima* daily, 07/03/1999.

EU's neutrality critically, threatening to reopen the issue of an EU customs union accord with Turkey and block Union funds earmarked for Turkey.[74]

However, contrary to expectations that the aftermath of the crisis could lead to a tense security dilemma, Athens adopted a conciliatory diplomatic approach towards Ankara (with NATO, EU and US encouragement), initiated through military confidence building measures, including a hot line between military commanders and the exchange of dates when major military exercises would be undertaken so as to avoid scheduling conflicts (measures proposed by NATO Secretary General Javier Solana and endorsed by both governments). In 1997, during a NATO meeting in Madrid, the Turkish President Süleyman Demirel and the Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis adopted a joint declaration affirming the two countries' intention to abstain from unilateral actions which could lead to a conflict and committed to the peaceful resolution of bilateral issues.[75]

The settlement of disputes based on international law provisions became a cornerstone of Greek foreign policy and the Greek MFA requested Turkey to have all issues "dealt with by legal means provided for by international law and specifically the International Court of Justice (ICJ)."[76] Greek overtures were not limited to the effective acknowledgement of Turkish interests in the Aegean,[77] but took an unprecedented turn in the following years, culminating in the December 1999 (during the Helsinki EU Summit) relinquishment of the Greek veto to

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[74] "Greece and Turkey: The Rocky Islet Crisis," p. 6.
[75] Ignatiou, M. and A. Ellis (2009), *Imia: The Secret American Telegrams*, (in Greek), Athens: Sideris, p. 382.
[76] Pangalos, T. (1998), "Principles of Greek Foreign Policy," *Mediterranean Quarterly*, 9:2, p. 5.
[77] "Turkey and Greece: Time to Settle the Aegean Dispute," International Crisis Group Europe Briefing, no. 64, 2011, p. 3, available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/b64-%20turkey%20and%20greece-%20time%20to%20settle%20the%20aegean%20dispute.pdf, [accessed 02/01/2015].

Turkey's bid for EU accession. [78] The latter initiative, considered to signify a critical juncture in modern Greek-Turkish relations, sought to internationalize Greek security concerns and constrain Turkish behaviour within EU "rules of the game."[79] Indeed, the endorsement of democratic norms and values was viewed by Greek elites as a potential catalyst for the abatement of Turkish assertiveness.[80]

Nevertheless, the novel Greek stance did not originate from a desire to surrender or to submit to Turkish objectives. On the contrary, from that point on, all Turkish activities aiming at challenging the status quo in the Aegean or Greek positions regarding maritime jurisdiction were to be answered through a more elaborate politico-military strategy. The doctrine of "flexible response," adopted by the Greek military almost immediately after the Imia crisis,[81] was indicative of the new understanding among Greek policymakers regarding the future of the Greek-Turkish militarized rivalry. Emphasizing joint operations, an increased reliance on rapid reaction forces and the procurement of modern weapon systems, the updated Greek posture envisaged a proportionate reciprocation of hostile actions.

The concept of flexible response emerged during the Cold War, when the conventional forces in Europe of both NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries were in relative parity, thereby negating the need for an American reliance on the "massive retaliation" doctrine which rendered a nuclear exchange a rather

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[78] The 1997 Madrid agreement between Greek Prime Minister Simitis and Turkish President Demirel. See Athanasopoulos, H. (2001), *Greece, Turkey, and the Aegean Sea: a Case Study in International Law*, Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, p. 99.

[79] Tsakonas, P. and A. Tournikiotis (2003), "Greece's Elusive Quest for Security Providers: The Expectations-Reality Gap," *Security Dialogue*, 34:3, p. 309.

[80] Makris, S. (2000), "Democratic Peace and Greek Foreign Policy: The Case of Helsinki," (in Greek), The Society for Social and Economic Studies, available at http://www.ekome.gr/english/default.asp, [accessed 08/04/2014].

[81] Tsilikas, S. (2001), *Greek Military Strategy: The Doctrine of Deterrence and its implications on Greek-Turkish Relations*, Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, p. 26, available at www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA397555, [accessed 13/01/2015].

plausible crisis outcome.[82] Flexible response allows forces to adapt and react to the specific circumstances posed by a threat or attack. At the same time, flexible response requires a degree of situation awareness and gradual escalation which are only made possible through the procurement of technologically advanced systems and the creation of highly mobile forces. As a result, the adoption of this strategy entails increased defence spending levels and advanced organizational capabilities which would allow, for instance, the undertaking of complex joint operations. The American experience in the early days of the Kennedy administration (under McNamara's guidance) was characteristic of the financial, organizational and operational challenges associated with this doctrine.[83]

By replacing the prior deterrence doctrine based on the threat of escalation and unpredictability, Greek strategists hoped to respond effectively in future crises, without facing the daunting dilemma of retreat or an all-out war. The underlying logic in the Greek case was that in the event of hostile takeover of, for instance, an islet by Turkish forces, Greek forces would respond at an equal or comparable level, so that Greece would attain leverage towards returning to the status quo through negotiation.[84] In the following years, the flexible response doctrine became a cornerstone of Greek security thinking. Athanasios Tzoganis, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, confirmed the application of flexible response in future crises in the Aegean as early as 1997.[85] And according to the 2000 "White Paper of the Hellenic Armed Forces," three elements constitute the

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[82] Betts, R. (1985), "Conventional Deterrence: Predictive Uncertainty and Policy Confidence," *World Politics*, 37:2, p. 156.
[83] See Kaufmann, W. (1964), *The McNamara Strategy*, New York: Harper and Row.
[84] Tsilikas, "The Doctrine of Deterrence and its implications on Greek-Turkish Relations," p. 26.
[85] Interview, *To Vima* Sunday ed., 20/07/1997.

basis of Greece's defence planning: defensive sufficiency, flexible response, and the joint defence area (Greece's extended deterrence coverage to Cyprus).[86]

This shift was indicative of a major perceptual change. While Greek intelligence on Turkish intentions appeared to be accurate before the onset and during the Imia crisis, it was only after the crisis that these motivations were properly assimilated, reflecting the new tactical realities that the Greek military had to face. Indeed, in his memoirs, then Prime Minister Costas Simitis repeatedly asserts that he understood the Imia crisis as a manifestation of the Turkish aim to challenge the legitimate Greek rights in the Aegean.[87] That was an accurate assessment, rendered more important by Simitis's sound objective which was to "avoid confrontation and troops amassing."[88] The flawed Greek response, however, indicates that misperceptions of Turkish tactics and capabilities were pervasive, leading to a crisis mismanagement that almost led the two countries to war.

The Greek strategic realignment following the Imia crisis appeared to be a natural, well-calibrated response to Turkey's behaviour. However, one has to point out that for years after its adoption, this shift was far from uncontroversial among Greek strategy thinkers. Two years after the Imia crisis, the perception that Turkey's real goal was to crush the Greek armed forces and seize Greek territory was existent and frequently expressed across Greek media, for instance.[89] Prominent analysts and academics suggested that Turkey had acquired a first strike capability in the course of recent years and for this reason was willing to

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[86] Hellenic Ministry of Defence White Paper, Athens, 2000.
[87] Simitis, C. (2005), *Politics for a Creative Greece, 1996-2004*, (in Greek), Athens: Polis Publications.
[88] Ibid, p. 66.
[89] See for instance the contribution of the prominent Greek academic Panagiotis Kondylis: "What Ankara aims for in the Aegean", *To Vima* daily, 08/02/1998.

engage Greece in militarized crises. Therefore, Greece should, according to this line of thinking, follow suit and acquire strategic weapons that could provide its armed forces with a first strike capability.[90]

While assessments such as the aforementioned were present in the Greek political discourse, successive Greek governments were confident that they would have to face a low intensity, attrition-based campaign by Turkey, aimed at establishing legal and political claims in a sensitive maritime area. As the 1996 crisis faded from memory, an assumption among Greeks prevailed that Turkey would not seek an all-out war between the two countries but "a series of low level threats in a number of issue areas."[91] And the doctrine of flexible response appeared to be a highly compatible policy response to this new page of the centuries-old rivalry between the two countries. However, the new strategy also required new armaments and capabilities previously unavailable to Greek armed forces despite consistently high defence spending levels. This was a necessity, so as to acquire advanced technological capabilities and create highly mobile forces.[92]

Thus, while in the diplomatic front and the tactical level Greece emphasized de-escalation and diplomatic engagement, the Greek Prime Minister announced in 1996 a five-year, USD 17 billion military overhaul program, the biggest procurement program in the history of the Greek armed forces.[93] It was calculated that this initiative would singlehandedly increase Greece's public debt from 30%

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Arvanitopoulos, C. (1997), "Greek Defence Policy and the Doctrine of Extended Deterrence," in A. Theophanous and V. Coufoudakis (eds), *Security and Cooperation in the Eastern Mediterranean*, Nicosia: Intercollege Press, p. 154.
[92] George, A. and R. Smoke (1974), *Deterrence in American Foreign Policy: Theory and Practice*, New York: Columbia University Press, p. 31.
[93] "The procurement programme of the Greek Armed Forces," *Military Technology*, 22:8, p. 4.

to 40% of its GDP.[94] At first glance, an overhaul of this magnitude could act as a catalyst for further crises, particularly when the domestic political atmosphere could render a revanchist stance a highly tempting choice among Greek voters. Moreover, this procurement program would send a signal to Ankara which could also be viewed with apprehension. However, the ensuing stability in bilateral relations indicates that Greek perceptions were now better aligned with the realities of the rivalry, adapting to the Turkish operational conduct in the Aegean, even though disputes between the two countries remain, to this day, unresolved.

It has to be noted that this stability was achieved in spite of challenges posed by Ankara. Following the Imia crisis, the Turkish military would regularly dispute the status of inhabited islands (for the first time after 1923), in an effort to force Greece to negotiate a comprehensive settlement of maritime jurisdiction issues. In May 30 1996, during the planning of NATO exercise "Dynamic Mix 1996", the Turkish representative asserted that the inhabited island of Gavdos, located south-west of Crete, is another "grey" area for Turkey.[95] In the following years, Turkish officials have repeatedly reiterated the existence of "grey zone" areas in the Aegean Sea, usually in the form of islands, islets and rocks not specifically mentioned in international or bilateral treaties. [96]

Of course, there is always a possibility that even a low level incident accidentally leads to an escalation. On October 1996, a Turkish F-16 crashed in the Aegean after a tense dogfight with a Greek fighter jet, with Turkish authorities claiming

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[94] Athanassopoulou, "Blessing in disguise?," p. 90.
[95] Ibid, p. 87.
[96] For an overview see Kurumahmut, A. (ed.) (1998), *The Fundamental Issue in the Aegean: The Islands of Disputed Sovereignty*, Ankara: Ataturk Foundation for the Study of Culture, Language and History.

that it was shot down by the Greek Air-Force.[97] In the following years, a number of similarly tense incidents took place. In May 2006, a Greek and a Turkish F-16 collided during a mock dogfight resulting in the destruction of both planes and the death of the Greek pilot.[98] According to the Greek Air-Force General Staff, in the decade 2000-2009, the Greek Air-Force scrambled 19,888 aircraft in order to intercept Turkish fighter jets over the Aegean Sea.[99] Minor incidents involving the two coastguards and navies are equally frequent but the emphasis on proportionate response and de-escalation has enabled Greece to avoid a conflagration that would put the country's leadership in an adverse position.

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[97] "Deadly 1996 clash is confirmed," F-16 net, 22/05/2003, available at http://www.f-16.net/f-16-news-article619.html, [accessed 08/01/2015].

[98] "Greek, Turkish fighter jets crash," CNN international, 23/05/2006, available at http://edition.cnn.com/2006/WORLD/europe/05/23/greece.crash/, [accessed 07/01/2015].

[99] "26 million Euros per year for the Turkish aggression," *Ethnos* daily, 20/03/2010.

Chapter 8:

The 2008 South-Ossetia Crisis

8.1: Introduction

On August 7 2008, after a series of militarized incidents that had taken place during the preceding days, the Georgian army launched a military offensive aimed at reasserting control over the secessionist province of South Ossetia. The following day, the Georgian government announced the capture of Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, which was devastated by rocket and artillery fire.[1] In the meantime, however, Russia, South Ossetia's long-term ally, had launched a full-scale counter-offensive against Georgian forces located in both the secessionist territory and other parts of Georgia. In the ensuing days, Russian forces succeeded in not only driving the Georgian military out of the province, but also in opening a second front in Georgia's other separatist province of Abkhazia.[2]

Before their eventual withdrawal in late August, the approximately 20,000 Russian troops who had taken part in the operation had advanced deep into Georgian territory, inflicting heavy damage and casualties in the cities of Gori, Poti and Senaki. Assets of the Georgian military and civilian infrastructure were destroyed, including the railway connection between the eastern and western parts of the country. While figures remain unconfirmed, some 238 Georgians were killed, almost 1,500 were wounded and over 100,000 Georgians were displaced

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[1] "Russia-Georgia conflict: Timeline," *The Telegraph*, available at http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/2547451/Russia-Georgia-conflict-timeline.html, [accessed 08/09/2014].
[2] Ibid.

due to the conflict.[3] In South Ossetia, Human Rights Watch puts the death toll in the lower hundreds, but the exact number of casualties has yet to be verified.

This chapter will forego the wider repercussions of Russia's first military foray into another sovereign state since the invasion of Afghanistan in 1979; instead, it will mainly focus on Georgia's strategically absurd decision to attack what was in essence a Russian protectorate, obliterating a Russian base and targeting its personnel in the process. While in retrospect there is little doubt that Georgian calculations were highly erroneous, leading to a grave strategic blunder, the source of these calculations has thus far remained unclear.

This chapter suggests that the Georgian strategic blunder could be attributed to misperceptions engendered during preceding crises in 2003 and 2004. While other factors may have also influenced decision-makers in Tbilisi, their expectations appear to have been decisively shaped by prior events and the dynamics of the environment in which they had transpired. In 2008, however, Georgian policy planners failed to take into account a series of powerful signals coming from Moscow in the run-up to the conflict, in addition to significant geopolitical shifts that should have been properly assessed by policymakers. As a result, Georgian perceptions remained inaccurate during the crisis, leading to a catastrophic war which undermined the security of both the country and the wider region.

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[3] Antonenko, O. (2008), "A War without Winners," *Survival*, 50:5, p. 24.

Figure 8-A: Georgia and the Secessionist Provinces

8.2: Historical Overview

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Caucasus has been one of the focal points of post-Cold War conflicts, with violence erupting as a result of persistent differences over borders and the reassertion of dormant ethnic identities. The country of Georgia has mainly existed as part of the Russian Empire since the early 19th century, while Ossetians joined the Russian empire as

an independent unit in the 1750s. During Georgia's short-lived independence from 1918 to 1921, it incorporated in its territory the provinces of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. In the Soviet years, Stalin, first as Commissar for Nationalities and later in his capacity as the General Secretary of the Communist Party, granted (nominally) South Ossetia and Abkhazia the right to secede from Georgia,[4] a right exercised by both provinces following Georgian independence in 1991. Shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union, South Ossetians had already declared a status of autonomy (September 1990), abolished by the Georgian Supreme Soviet on December 11, 1990. This denial led to tensions, which escalated to armed conflict by early 1991.[5] Zviad Gamsakhurdia's (the first post-Soviet Georgian President) campaign to reassert Georgia's authority over South Ossetia and Abkhazia through military means came to an end in December 1991, when he was overthrown by former Soviet Foreign Minister Edward Shevardnadze.

In May 1992, a peace agreement ended hostilities and effectively acknowledged the de facto independence of South Ossetia, whose ethnic communities continued to share the Ossetian territory.[6] The province, however, remained part of the Georgian state. In the following years, relations between Georgia and its breakaway regions were tense but relatively stable, showing the trademark signs of "frozen conflicts." Effectively, since the 1992 "Agreement on the Principles of the Settlement of the Georgian-Ossetian Conflict between Georgia and Russia," no military confrontations had occurred in the disputed region.[7] Indeed, the joint

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[4] Mitchell, L. (2009), "Georgia Postbellum," *American Interest*, 4:5, p. 67.
[5] Petro, N. (2009), "The Russia-Georgia War: Causes and Consequences," *Global Dialogue*, Volume 11, p. 2, available at http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=439, [accessed 09/02/2015].
[6] Welt, C. (2010), "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict: The Internal Security Dilemma and the 2004 Prelude to the Russo-Georgian War," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 62:1, p. 69.
[7] "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," International Crisis Group Europe Report 159, 2004, p. 1, available at http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/159_georgia_avoiding_war_in_south_ossetia.pdf, [accessed 03/12/2014].

peacekeeping operation can be considered a success between 1992 and 2003, with a stable security outlook and unhindered trans-border movement and trade.[8]

In 2003, the "Rose Revolution" brought Mikhail Saakashvilli to power. Saakashvili was the lead figure of the peaceful demonstrations in Tbilisi against Shevardnadze's "Citizens Union of Georgia (CUG)" party efforts to force a fraudulent election result.[9] Protestors managed to secure Shevardnadze's resignation and in January 2004, the newly elected Saakashvili promised to restore Georgia's territorial integrity within his first term.[10] For Georgia, reintegrating its separatist provinces was not simply a matter of national pride. The porous borders of these regions facilitated illicit trade and the proliferation of asymmetrical threats, compromising the nation's security.

Moreover, Russia's encroachment on Georgian sovereignty through the provision of financial incentives, paramilitary personnel and equipment, along with passports to Ossetians and Abkhazians, cast a shadow on the prospects of the small Caucasian democracy to take control of its own destiny in international politics. In short, the frozen conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia undermined the Georgians' desire and effort to secure a candidate status with both NATO and the European Union, organizations they aspired to join.

Initially, the new Georgian leadership appeared conciliatory towards Russia, especially after the former Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov's positive

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[8] "Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly," International Crisis Group Europe Report 183, 2007, p. 3, available at
www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/183_georgia_s_south_ossetia_conflict_make_haste_slowly.ashx, [accessed 20/01/2015].
[9] Cooley, A. and L. Mitchell (2009), "No Way to Treat Our Friends: Recasting Recent U.S.-Georgian Relations," *The Washington Quarterly*, 32:1, p. 28.
[10] Hewitt, G. (2009), "Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Crisis of August 2008: Roots and Lessons," *Global Dialogue*, Volume 11, p. 19, available at http://www.worlddialogue.org/content.php?id=442, [accessed 09/02/2015].

contribution towards resolving the Georgian political crisis by "encouraging" Shevardnadze to resign.[11] The vibe was definitely positive when President-elect Saakashvili attended a Kremlin summit on February 2004. Concrete steps were taken by the Georgian government, which initiated a crackdown on Chechen separatists operating in Georgia, with Russia reciprocating through economic and energy-related rewards.[12] Improving bilateral relations was regarded as an important factor in securing a settlement in Georgia's frozen conflicts, as Moscow maintained a peacekeeping force in both Abkhazia and South Ossetia and was widely viewed as the guarantor of their security.[13] Events between 2004 and 2008 will be described in detail, after the examination of the 2008 crisis and war.

8.3: Crisis, Escalation and War

On the night of July 3 2008, Georgians and South Ossetians exchanged artillery fire after a roadside mine injured Dmitriy Sanakoyev, the head of the pro-Georgian government in South Ossetia (not recognized by Ossetians). A few days earlier, a local police officer had been killed by a bomb attack and the atmosphere was already tense in Tskhinvali. The skirmishes that ensued in South Ossetian villages between paramilitary forces of both sides escalated during the last week of July with shellings and shootouts between Georgian and Ossetian positions in the province. On August 1, a roadside bomb attack on a Georgian vehicle triggered a further escalation and an exchange of fire between Tskhinvali and positions in the Georgian-controlled villages to its south, during which six

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[11] Tsygankov, A. and M. Tarver-Wahlquist, (2009), "Duelling Honors: Power, Identity and the Russia–Georgia Divide," *Foreign Policy Analysis*, 5:4, p. 310.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Donaldson, R. and J. Nogee (2005), *The Foreign Policy of Russia: Changing Systems, Enduring Interests*, Armong, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 4th ed., p. 199.

Ossetians died.[14] On August 4, the South Ossetian self-proclaimed leader, Eduard Kokoity, issued an ultimatum to Georgia, demanding that all armed forces be withdrawn, warning that Ossetians would "take the most decisive measures in order to resolve this problem for good," should Georgians fail to comply.[15]

On the evening of August 7, Saakashvili announced a unilateral ceasefire and reaffirmed the official position that South Ossetia would be granted increased autonomy within the Georgian state.[16] Georgian troops had already advanced inside South Ossetian territory in the days preceding the conflict, assuming control of strategic points around Tskhinvali, while the Georgian peacekeeping force had returned to Georgia, in anticipation of the major offensive.[17] At 11:35pm the Georgian military initiated a large-scale offensive, responding to an alleged shelling of Georgian villages in South Ossetia[18] (the Georgian government argued that it began its attack only after Russian tanks had crossed the Roki Tunnel connecting Russia and South Ossetia.)[19]

Russia's response came swiftly. On August 8, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev asserted that the previous day, "Georgian troops committed what amounts to an act of aggression against Russian peacekeepers and the civilian population in South Ossetia."[20] Medvedev referred to the attack against the Russian Peacekeeping Force in Tskhinvali which was undertaken by Georgian

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[14] "Six Die in S. Ossetia Shootout," www.Civil.ge news, August 2 2008, cited in Welt, "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict," p. 93.
[15] Interfax, August 4 2008.
[16] Interfax, August 7 2008.
[17] "Russia's rapid reaction," *Strategic Comments*, 14:7, 2008.
[18] Chivers, C. and E. Barry, "Accounts undercut claims by Georgia on Russia war," *The New York Times*, November 7 2008.
[19] Antonenko, "A War without Winners," p. 24.
[20] President of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev's Statement on the Situation in South Ossetia, August 8 2008, http://www.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2008/08/08/1553_type82912type82913_205032.shtml, [accessed 09/10/2014].

forces in the morning of August 8. By noon, Russian peacekeepers manning the base had sustained their first two casualties.[21] The Russian President further characterized Georgian actions as a violation of international law as well of the mandate accorded to Russia in the peace process.[22]

In the following hours, some 20,000 Russian troops entered South Ossetia and rapidly spread into the other secessionist province of Abkhazia. Opening a second front was a deliberate move, with Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia assisting local forces in executing offensive operations in the Kodori valley (the only part of Abkhazia still controlled by Georgian forces) and the border city of Gali. Reinforcements arrived by sea, with the Russian Black Sea fleet securing positions along the Georgian coastline and establishing a naval blockade in order to secure Abkhazia's coast. Russian ships quickly engaged the relatively small Georgian naval forces (Russian forces later took full control of the Georgian naval base of Poti, where they sunk four Georgian vessels).[23]

Russian units then moved beyond the two enclaves, expanding their operations deep inside Georgian territory by August 10, occupying the towns of Gori, Zugdidi and Senaki, while the Russian Air-Force (backed by Su-24s Fencer and Su-27 Flanker fighter jets as well as Tu-22 Backfire bombers) destroyed targets

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[21] Council of the European Union Report of the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, Brussels, 2009, Vol. III, p. 371.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Gorenburg, D. (2008), "The Russian Black Sea Fleet after the Georgian War," PONARS *Eurasia Policy Memo* no. 48, available at http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm_048.pdf, [accessed 15/09/2014].

in Gori, Rustavi and Tbilisi.[24] On the same day, Georgia declared a ceasefire and begun withdrawing its forces from South Ossetia.[25]

The war ended on August 12 with the mutually agreed "six point plan," establishing a ceasefire between Russia and Georgia with French mediation. Nevertheless, Russian forces attacked the Georgian city of Gori on August 13 and for the next week, they appeared reluctant to disengage from positions within Georgian territory.[26] The agreement was finally signed on August 16, stipulating that Russia and Georgia should withdraw their forces to the positions they held before the onset of hostilities. The Russian government announced that the goal of coercing Georgia to peace had been achieved and its operations were concluded, with Georgian forces pushed out of both South Ossetia and the Kodori Valley, the sole part of Abkhazia Georgian forces controlled before the crisis.[27]

8.4: Non-Perceptual Factors

There is little doubt among analysts that dispatching Georgian forces in South Ossetia was a miscalculation by Mikhail Saakashvili. However, miscalculation in international politics does not equal misperception. Saakashvili and his administration may have been well aware of Russian intentions and Moscow's capacity to threaten Georgia, but may have still chosen to go down the path of escalation. How can we ascertain that erroneous perceptions were in fact directly relevant to the mismanagement of the 2008 crisis? A widespread explanation, for

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[24] "Russians Push Past Separatist Region to Assault City in Central Georgia," *New York Times*, August 11 2008; Ellison, B. (2011), "Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War," *Demokratizatsiya*, 19:4, pp. 356-357.
[25] "August 2008 Russian-Georgian War: Timeline," Institute for War and Peace Reporting, available at http://go.iwpr.net/1BiAiMf, [accessed 22/01/2015].
[26] Ellison, "Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War," p. 354.
[27] "August 2008 Russian-Georgian War: Timeline."

example, wants the Georgian leader to have fallen victim of his own ambition and confrontational character.[28] A related scenario views the conflict through the lens of a "diversionary war" narrative. According to its proponents, Georgian nationalist sentiments were manipulated by Saakashvilli and members of his party. The potential rationale is eloquently exposed by Cooley and Mitchell:

"The Georgian government was coming off a six-month period which had seen a government crackdown on street demonstrations, followed by a state of emergency and two elections, held in January and May of 2008. The elections themselves strengthened Saakashvili and UNM's formal grip on power, though the elections were assessed as being less than democratic by international monitors and even more critically by domestic observers. Even though economic development in Georgia was good overall, the benefits had not yet trickled down to ordinary Georgians, and still came far short of the unrealistic expectations set by the Georgian government. The political support of the administration, therefore, continued to weaken even as its formal power grew. Tbilisi's strategy for remaining strong in the face of these unmet expectations and political turmoil was to raise expectations again-this time over the future of Abkhazia and South Ossetia."[29]

Saakashvili's democratic credentials were being eroded, giving way to totalitarian practices, even though his reformist rhetoric had remained intact. The Georgian leader did not hesitate to expose his sense of domestic insecurity, asserting for instance that "Georgia doesn't need a European model, we want a Singapore or

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[28] "Georgia: Mikheil Saakashvili, the man who lost it all," *Daily Telegraph*, August 12 2008.
[29] Cooley and Mitchell, "No Way to Treat Our Friends," p. 34.

Dubai model here."[30] While it is difficult to measure the extent to which personality traits and domestic calculations affected the decision to launch an operation in South Oseetia, the impact of such characteristics does not necessarily contravene a misperception-based explanation. After all, personality deficits in leaders render decision-making even more prone to misperception, creating the base for irrational cost-benefit analyses. Finally, one has to consider the possibility that the Georgian leadership was in fact coerced into a conflict it did not seek. In other words, it is worth exploring the possibility that Georgia was either attacked or faced an imminent attack by Russian forces, a situation that would substantially limit available options to the country's decision makers.

Indeed, a consensus among the Georgian elite posited that Russia was already assimilating the breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, with some analysts going as far as suggesting that Russia had decided long before August 2008 to deploy its military in order to consolidate position.[31] Scott Horton, an expert in the law of armed conflict at Columbia University provided such a narrative: "I think he [Saakashvili] knew the Russians were looking for an opportunity or a pretext to seize South Ossetia and Abkhazia. He felt he had a last opportunity to consolidate South Ossetia because the Russian plan was already laid."[32] A related account sees Russian preparations to invade Georgia, and even enforce a regime change in Tbilisi.[33] While the imminence of a Russian attack has

[30] Wilson, A. and N. Popescu, (2009): "Russian and European neighbourhood policies compared," *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, 9:3, p. 325.
[31] Illarionov, A. (2009), "The Russian Leadership's Preparation for War, 1999-2008," in S. Cornell and F. Starr (eds), *The Guns of August 2008: Russia's War in Georgia*, Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, pp. 49-84.
[32] "Georgia: Mikheil Saakashvili, the man who lost it all."
[33] Smith, D. (2009), "The Saakashvili Administration's Reaction to Russian Policies Before the 2008 War, in Cornell and Starr, *The Guns of August 2008*, pp. 122-142.

not acquired much credence in the relevant literature, these explanations insert an element of necessity in Georgian actions that is worth evaluating.

Upon a closer inspection, however, the "necessity" of Georgian choices can only be questioned. Besides the fact that South Ossetia and Abkhazia had enjoyed a form of de facto independence for almost two decades, the imminence of a Russian attack seems unsupported by evidence. Russian military manoeuvres were held in proximity to South Ossetia for years, while the balance of power between Georgia and the separatist provinces had shifted dramatically to Georgia's favour after 2004, without a Russian response. Thus, neither a Russian attack nor a status quo change appeared more probable in 2008. By that year, the South Ossetian tank strength had been reduced to about 10 obsolete T-55s, barely capable of competing with the newly procured Georgian battle tanks.[34] Other types of weaponry such as heavy artillery and rocket systems were also limited with ammunition stocks at low levels in both secessionist provinces. And while South Ossetia hosted a contingent of Russian peacekeepers (about 2,300), the lightly armed force was in no position to pose a threat to the Georgian army.[35]

That is not to say that Russia was not aiming at increasing its influence on both provinces. The "creeping assimilation" thesis remains plausible, but the Georgian leadership was far from "forced" to act. Russian troops were only deployed in the early hours of August 8, seven hours after the Georgian operation was initiated.[36] A NATO intelligence officer, when asked whether unusual Russian troop

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[34] Pukhov, R. (ed.) (2010), *The Tanks of August*, Moscow: Centre for Analysis of Strategies and Technologies, p. 39.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Antonenko, "A War without Winners," p. 24. According to the Tagliavini Report (the commonly known name of the report by the Council of the European Union's Independent International Fact Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia) "open hostilities began with a large-scale Georgian military operation against the town of Tskhinvali and the surrounding areas, launched in the night of 7 to 8 August 2008" (Vol. I, p. 19).

movements had been detected prior to the outbreak of hostilities, admitted that there were "none whatsoever. And that's the honest truth."[37] Russian soldiers "reacted with surprise to the Georgian attack that followed—as though their own intelligence did not alert ground forces during the days and hours leading up to it."[38] Finally, the historical record indicates that countries initiating wars usually have their leaders coordinating actions from the capital. It is unlikely that Russia was planning to start a war when the both President and the Prime Minister were away from Moscow; On August 7, Putin was in Beijing for the 2008 Olympics opening ceremony, while Medvedev was on a working trip to the Volga region.[39]

While Moscow's capacity for strategic deception is indisputable, there is a growing consensus, even among Western analysts, on the course of events in 2008: Georgia initiated a large scale operation in order to "capture the city in the shortest possible time and to hand over nominal control of the territory to a pro-Georgian administration."[40] Thus, in the dramatic summer of 2008, the Georgian government had at the very least a few alternative courses of action, rendering the scrutiny of perceptions useful to our analysis. But shedding light on Georgian perceptions in 2008 requires us to closely examine their evolution since the preceding crises of 2003-2004, which set the tone for events occurring in 2008.

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[37] Labarre, F. (2009), "Sustainable Armor Capability for Small Powers: The Case of Georgia in the August War," Baltic Security & Defence Review, 11:2, p. 103.
[38] Ellison, "Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War," p. 353.
[39] Sakwa, R. (2012), "Conspiracy Narratives as a Mode of Engagement in International Politics: The Case of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War," The Russian Review 71:4, p. 595.
[40] "Russia's rapid reaction."

8.5: The 2003 - 2004 Ajaran and South Ossetian Crises

From the early days of the "Rose Revolution," Mikhail Saakashvili and his Prime Minister, Zurab Zhvania, pledged to restore Georgia's territorial integrity, committing that this would be achieved within the new government's first term. On July 20 2004, Saakashvili adopted a more assertive tone, stating that the Dagomys Accords that ended the early 1990s war between Georgia and South Ossetia would be renounced if the Georgian flag did not fly over Tskhinvali.[41] He was undoubtedly emboldened by his first success which had come earlier, when the leader of Ajara capitulated to an ultimatum set by Tbilisi in 2003.

Ajara, a secessionist Georgian province (populated by ethnic Georgians), had retained its status of autonomy after the collapse of the Soviet Union within the newly independent Georgian state. In April 2000, the Georgian Parliament officially granted Ajara the status of an autonomous republic.[42] The specific division of powers, however, between Tbilisi and Ajara was not clarified. Ajara's fortunes were predominantly determined by the ambition of the region's head figure, Aslan Abashidze, who took advantage of the central government's disarray to assert his authority, thwarting all opposition to his rule. After establishing a series of administrative, political and judicial institutions that de facto removed most Ajaran matters from Tbilisi's jurisdiction, Abashidze officially declared himself President in 2003.[43]

Reintegration could not be achieved by decree. Abashidze had ensured that most of the state structures he created were run by, or closely linked to, the President's

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[41] Petro, "The Russia-Georgia War."
[42] "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," p.3
[43] Ibid.

family and powerful supporters.[44] The Ajaran leader had also moved to establish a firm political presence in Tbilisi, with his "Democratic Revival Union" party playing an increasingly significant role in Georgian politics. With Saakashvili's declared intent to strengthen the cohesion of Georgian governance structures, it was only a matter of time before Ajara's relations with Tbilisi deteriorated.

In March 2004, Ajaran soldiers prevented the newly elected Georgian leader from entering the region. Tbilisi responded by imposing an economic blockade, while Abashidze warned that tensions could escalate to an all-out conflict. On April 19, the commander of the 25th Motor-Rifle brigade, based in the Ajaran capital of Batumi, General Dumbadze, declared that his soldiers "answer only to Aslan Abashidze, our supreme commander."[45] On May 2, responding to large-scale manoeuvres by the Georgian military near the province border, Abashidze's forces blew up two bridges and damaged the railway link connecting Ajara to Georgia.[46]

For the first time in years, Tbilisi responded assertively, providing a ten day ultimatum to the Ajaran leader for the disarmament of his militias. Escalation appeared likely at that point. Abashidze enjoyed the support of both his cronies and Moscow, similarly to the breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Moreover, under a mandate from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Russia had also deployed troops across Ajara's land and sea borders.[47] Specifically, Russia's military base in the Black Sea town of Batumi,

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Global security website, available at http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/ajara.htm, [accessed 01/02/2015].
[46] Ibid.
[47] Radvanyi J. and N. Beroutchachvili (1999), "Adjara, advantage and weakness of Georgia," (in French), *CEMOTI*, 27:1, cited in "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," p.8.

the capital of Ajara and a major regional commercial centre, was of particular strategic significance. Nevertheless, Tbilisi's gamble was successful. Abashidze's position weakened when members of his cabinet and security forces switched sides, joining the pro-Tbilisi demonstrations already taking place in Ajara.[48] More importantly, Russia removed its support from the separatist leader, allowing Georgia to reassert its authority over the province. After consultations with Moscow, and the personal mediation of Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Abashidze and his associates departed from Ajara in the early hours of May 6 2004, allowing the central government to regain control of the province.

Following the swift reintegration of Ajara, Saakashvili's administration would move to "unfreeze" the South Ossetian conflict, through the implementation of a "carrot and stick" strategy, consisting of financial incentives and increased militarized pressure. In January 2004, the Georgian government offered South Ossetia broad autonomy within Georgia under a federative framework. Concurrently, Tbilisi began financing new social projects with the aim of winning the "hearts and minds" of South Ossetians.[49] For South Ossetia's reintegration to be successful, however, the parallel, ad-hoc, economic structures established by secessionist authorities had to be disrupted. Saakashvili ordered the closure of the Tskhinvali "Ergneti" marketplace (where smuggled goods from Russia were traded, among others), which operated under the control of Eduard Kokoity, the separatist South Ossetian "President."[50] Tension was almost certain to ensue.

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[48] "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," p. 7.
[49] "Saakashvili Burns His Fingers Over South Ossetia Crisis," Agence France-Presse, August 16 2004.
[50] Ibid.

On May 31, Georgia deployed several hundred Interior Ministry troops along four checkpoints within the South Ossetian conflict zone (though only one of them was inside the province.)[51] On June 11 2004, amidst accusations that Russia was supplying weapons to South Ossetia, Georgian forces confiscated the content of two trucks belonging to Russian peacekeepers.[52] A day later, the South Ossetian militia retaliated by detaining some fifty troops in police uniforms in the ethnically Georgian-populated village of Vanati. By late July, tensions had escalated with exchanges of gun and mortar fire in many villages across the province. The conflict deescalated in late August, but only after a second ceasefire agreement was signed on August 18, 2004 by the Joint Control Commission (JCC) co-chairs and the Georgian Prime Minister Zhurab Zhvania.[53]

8.6: Impact on Georgian Perceptions

The aforementioned crises had a profound impact on Georgian perceptions. Moscow's stance during the Ajara crisis was rather surprising, considering its interests in the region. Besides indirectly exercising influence on the province through Abashidze, Russia maintained a military base in the strategically located Black Sea port city of Batumi, whose status would surely be (at the very least) questioned as soon as Georgia reinstated control over the province. After all, the question of Russian bases had long caused bitterness between Tbilisi and Moscow, often escalating to threats of sanctions or force. Nevertheless, the promotion of Russian business interests in Georgia and Moscow's desire to build

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[51] Welt, "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict," p. 80.
[52] "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," p. 14
[53] Ibid.

rapport with Saakashvili may have contributed towards an "amicable" resolution of the Ajaran crisis. The US-Russian détente at the time appears to have also played a positive role, with negotiations between the American government and Russia reportedly taking place at the highest level during the crisis.[54]

However, the specific internal and external conditions which allowed for the peaceful resolution of the particular crisis were not carefully evaluated by Georgian officials, who referred to Ajara as a model for the future resolution of the frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.[55] Coercion through the use of both diplomatic and military means had proven effective, while Western support appeared unequivocal throughout the crisis. It has to be noted though, that not all foreign analysts shared the Georgian leaders' newfound optimism regarding the future of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

A 2004 International Crisis Group report, for instance, accurately noted that Ajara "never sought independence based on national self-determination, and its people are ethnic Georgians, unlike the Ossetians and Abkhazi. Russia played an ambiguous but apparently not unhelpful role in the peaceful resolution of the May crisis. With Moscow's perceived security interests much more deeply engaged in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, however, Tbilisi's new round of brinksmanship is putting it in direct confrontation with its giant northern neighbour."[56]

Russia's stance during the 2004 crisis in South Ossetia remains equally puzzling. While Georgia eventually withdrew its forces from the region, Georgian troops had made advances inside the province, capturing strategic points from which

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[54] U.S. Department of State Daily Press Briefing, May 3 2004, cited in "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," p. 9.

[55] Cooley and Mitchell, "No Way to Treat Our Friends," p. 32.

[56] "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia."

they did not disengage during the withdrawal (figure 8-B).[57] And despite indications that Russian mercenaries reinforced South Ossetian militias,[58] there were no signs of a looming Russian counter-offensive, such as troop mobilizations or the transfer of heavy weaponry to the Ossetians via the Roki tunnel. On August 11 2004, the city of Tskhinvali came under heavy fire from Georgian forces and on the following days, open warfare appeared imminent (August 13-14); again, no evidence of a Russian mobilization.

Figure 8-B: Georgian-controlled areas (shaded areas) in South Ossetia 2004-2008
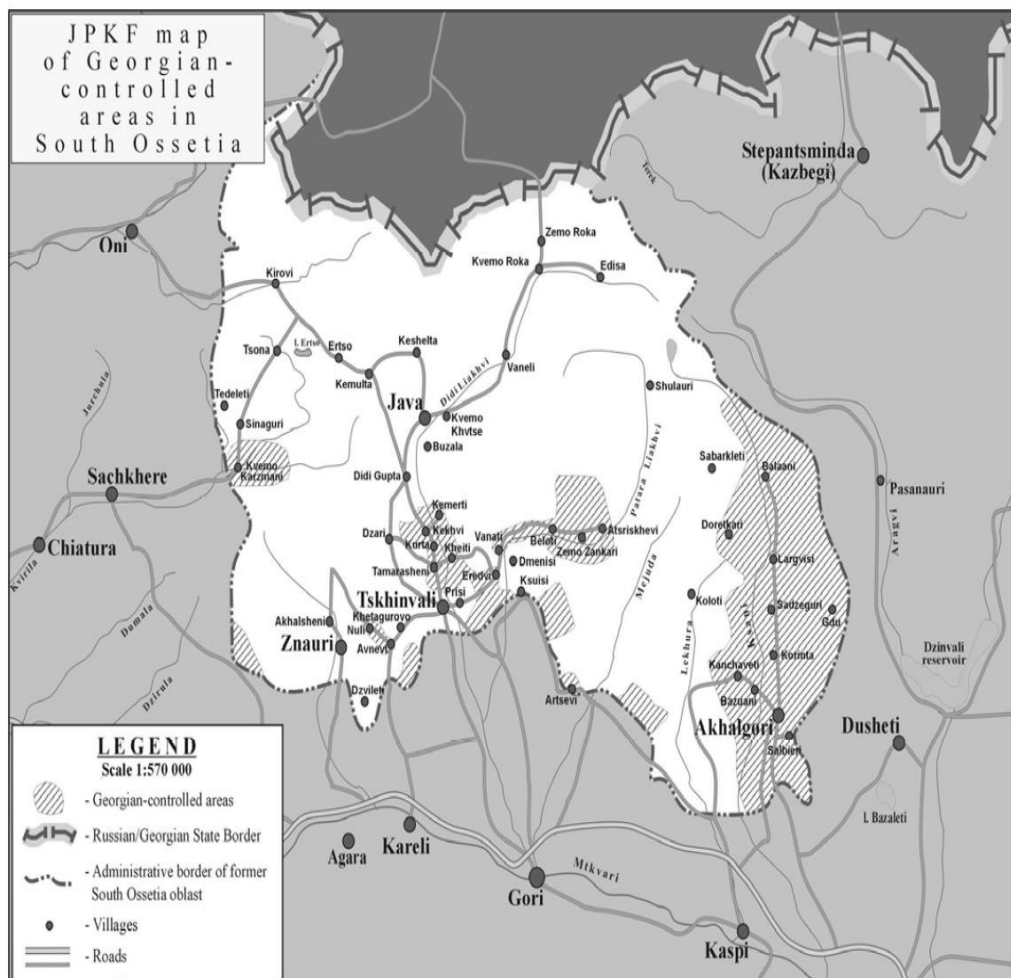
Source: ICG Europe Report 159, p. 28.

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[57] Ibid, p. 14.
[58] Ibid, p. 15.

Furthermore, all operations in South Ossetia were solely undertaken by Georgian forces against South Ossetian militias and possibly paramilitary reinforcements from the Caucasus. In critical instances (as in August 14), Russian peacekeepers preferred, in fact, to cede control of the situation to Ossetian militias.[59] And while statements coming from Moscow warned Georgia that Russia would respond to any military incursions in South Ossetia,[60] Vladimir Putin himself stated that the crisis would not evolve into a conflict between Georgia and Russia. "It is not like this, and it cannot be like this," he asserted.[61] Nevertheless, the Georgian operation was unsuccessful. By mid-August, Georgian positions in villages and strategic spots across South Ossetia appeared unsustainable in the face of fierce militia resistance, leading to their eventual withdrawal on August 19, 2004.

8.7: Georgian Perceptions between 2004 and 2008

The crises of 2003 and 2004 in Ajara and South Ossetia had a profound effect on Georgian perceptions as well as Georgian strategy. The country's security policy after the summer of 2004 focused on coercive diplomacy towards Abkhazia and South Ossetia, bolstered by a military component which aimed at bringing concrete results, should negotiations fail. One thing was clear: that the reintegration of both provinces was a priority for Tbilisi and was now deemed achievable. The Georgian government quickly stepped up its rhetoric vis-à-vis Russia. Givi Targamadze, the Georgian Parliament Chairman of the Defence and Security Committee stated that "from now on, our whole strategy will be built on

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[59] Rustavi-2 TV, Georgia, August 14 2004, cited in Welt, "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict," p. 87.
[60] See for example ITAR-TASS, July 7 2004.
[61] Statement by Vladimir Putin, August 18 2004, cited in "South Ossetia Crisis Stokes Tension between Russia and Georgia," Eurasianet, August 24 2004, available at www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav082504.shtml, [accessed 11/09/2014].

the notion that the army, the Georgian armed forces, should get ready to repel Russian aggression."[62] Saakashvili echoed this view asserting that "the [Georgian] population must be prepared" for a Russo-Georgian war.[63] The Georgian leadership did not try to hide its growing impatience with the apparent stalemate: "The status quo cannot continue. I am not going to wait for the next 100 years to resolve these problems. Therefore, we will be very aggressive in seeking peace," Saakashvili said on July 9 2005.[64]

Georgia's strategy would feature a political component. In January 2005, Georgia offered Ossetia broad autonomy with the launch of a highly publicized campaign towards achieving a negotiated solution.[65] In early July 2005, Georgian officials followed up with a conference aimed at accelerating the reunification process through a detailed "roadmap". However, the fact that the Ossetian leadership did not receive a formal invitation combined with the highly symbolic choice of holding the conference in Ajara undermined the prospects for success.

After all, it was clear that the Ossetian elite favoured integration with Russia at the expense of cutting ties with Tbilisi, while Ossetians viewed any Georgian initiative to change the status quo with suspicion. As Dmitri Medoyev, South Ossetia's representative to Russia said in a July 10, 2005 interview, "Our train left Georgia 15 years ago and [it] is now heading towards Russia."[66] In an unrecognized 2006 referendum, South Ossetians reaffirmed their "independence"

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[62] Interview broadcast by Imedi TV (Georgia) on August 24 2004, cited in "South Ossetia Crisis Stokes Tension between Russia and Georgia."

[63] *Liberation*, August 24 2004, (in French) "South Ossetia Crisis Stokes Tension between Russia and Georgia."

[64] Imedi TV (Georgia), cited in "South Ossetia Crisis Stokes Tension between Russia and Georgia."

[65] "Tension Again on the Rise in South Ossetia," Eurasianet, July 28 2005, available at http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav072905.shtml, [accessed 03/02/2015].

[66] Interfax (Russia), cited in "Georgia Promotes South Ossetia Peace Plan," Eurasianet, July 11 2005, available at www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav071205.shtml, [accessed 05/02/2015].

and subsequently re-elected Kokoity as their "President". Meanwhile, displaced Georgians from South Ossetia organized their own ballots, electing pro-Georgian Dmitriy Sanakoyev as governor (he exercised authority on Georgian controlled parts of South Ossetia since 2006) and calling for the preservation of Georgian territorial integrity.[67]

At the same time, the "carrot" of political and economic incentives was often combined with the "stick" of exercises by the Georgian army.[68] As the political stalemate between Tbilisi and Tskhinvali persisted, the military component of the Georgian strategy increased its potency. The lessons learned from the 2004 crisis were paramount in shaping Georgian security policy after 2004. In the 2004 crisis, Georgian military planners concluded that it would be "impossible for Georgia to restore its territorial integrity militarily."[69] Its security planners had realized that Georgia did not possess the necessary superiority in capabilities to regain and retain their secessionist provinces. According to Erosi Kitsmarishvili, Tbilisi's former ambassador to Moscow and confidant of President Saakashvili, "at a meeting chaired by President Saakashvili in the summer of 2004, launching a large-scale operation in South Ossetia was discussed, but the majority of the participants objected to it because the army was not ready for such an operation."[70]

In military terms, Ajara was undeniably an easy target, as it possessed a minimal force loyal to Abashidze which could not pose a challenge to Georgian troops.

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[67] Rahman, M. (2009), "Georgia and Russia: What Caused the August War?," *Identity, Culture and Politics: An Afro-Asian Dialogue*, 10:1, p. 134.

[68] "Tension Again on the Rise in South Ossetia."

[69] International Crisis Group interviews with senior analysts from the Georgian defence and security ministries, August 2004, cited in "Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia," p. 14.

[70] "War Has No Diplomatic Immunity Any Longer," *Kommersant* daily, November 26 2008, available at http://www.kommersant.com/p1081042/r_1/Georgian_commission_on_investigation_of_the_August_war_ends_with_a_scandal/, [accessed 28/11/2014].

The fact that Georgia chose to turn its attention to South Ossetia as opposed to the richer, strategically located province of Abkhazia, (which was also of intrinsic psychological value to Georgians) is telling. At that point, South Ossetia appeared to be a more "manageable" target. However, the harsh realities of asymmetrical warfare in South Ossetian villages would prove Tbilisi wrong, culminating in the 2004 Georgian retreat. The inability of the Georgian army to handle the situation in South Ossetia may also explain the reinforcement, on August 9 2004, of the already deployed Interior Ministry troops with a better trained contingent, specialized in counter-terrorist operations.[71] In the coming years, Georgian security policy would undergo a real transformation driven by these experiences.

A number of Georgian officials, such as the former Defence Minister Irakli Okruashvili (2004-2006), have actually stated that the Georgian leadership began planning the reintegration by military means of both South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2005.[72] Georgia adopted a military doctrine based on quick offensive operations, coupled with an armaments build-up which would ensure local superiority vis-à-vis the separatist provinces (including stationed Russian forces). Thus, since 2004 and by means of an ambitious military modernisation program, Georgia tried to pursue the -sometimes contradictory- goals of interoperability with NATO forces (with small, flexible units) and self-sufficiency (including the creation of a Reserve force and the build-up of air defences).[73] To achieve these targets, the Georgian government would have to ignore NATO recommendations for the reduction of the size of the Georgian army by 2015.[74]

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[71] Welt, "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict," p. 86.
[72] "Saakashvili 'Planned S. Ossetia Invasion': Ex-Minister", Reuters, September 14 2008.
[73] Pukhov, *The Tanks of August*.
[74] As reflected in the 2007 Georgian government "Strategic Defence Review."

Moving in quite the opposite direction, the Saakashvili administration proceeded to increase both the manpower and the capabilities of the armed forces, citing the country's contribution in Iraq as well as the deterioration of relations with Russia as reasons.[75] Georgia's defence spending pattern between 2005 and 2008 is indicative of a major arms build-up (Figure 8-C). Large orders for Western weaponry were placed (a first for a post-Soviet country in the CIS), made possible by an unprecedented increase in defence spending, which exceeded 8% of the country's GDP.[76] In 2007 and 2008, in particular, defence outlays accounted for approximately 30% of total government expenditure. Moreover, the Georgian armed forces undertook an organizational transformation as well, through the phasing out of conscription and the adoption of intensive training programs.

Figure 8-C: Defence Spending of Georgia (as % of GDP)
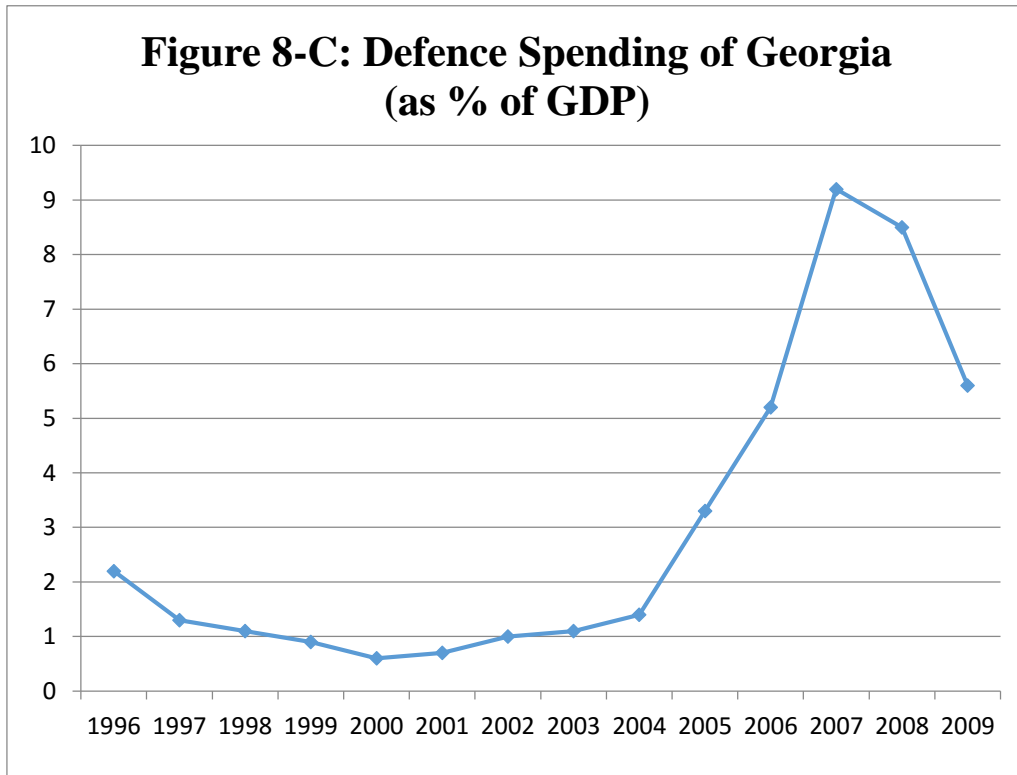
Source: SIPRI datasets on defence expenditure

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[75] "2008-2011 Minister's Vision Document," cited in Pukhov, *The Tanks of August*, p. 17.
[76] Pukhov, *The Tanks of August*, p. 38.

This build-up, although noticed by analysts for its potentially destabilising repercussions,[77] was touted by Georgian officials as a long overdue modernisation and professionalization initiative, in compliance with the country's aspirations to fulfil NATO membership criteria.[78] However, weapons procured weighed heavily on offensive operations in the two secessionist provinces, with official Georgian documents confirming that renewed hostilities in the breakaway provinces constitute the most probable security challenge for Georgia in the 2007-2012 timeframe.[79] T-72 tanks, heavy artillery and attack helicopters were procured in large numbers, while exercises focused on offensive operations.[80] An emphasis on counter-insurgency operations was also given, in preparation for potential unrest in the separatist regions once their regular forces had been defeated.

In 2004, Georgian military planners had faced a war of attrition by the Ossetian militia which proved an insurmountable obstacle to Georgian forces. After all, asymmetrical warfare poses a set of specific requirements in terms of training, equipment and doctrine.[81] Indeed, in 2008 the Georgian army proved capable of quickly (re)capturing South Ossetia. A highly trained and well equipped 12,000 strong Georgian force,[82] consisting of ten light infantry battalions, assisted by special task forces and artillery, overwhelmed Ossetian forces within hours, avoiding the repetition of the 2004 stalemate. That lesson was well-learned.

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[77] For example "Georgia's Big Military Spending Boost," July 19 2007, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) available at https://iwpr.net/global-voices/georgias-big-military-spending-boost, [accessed 04/11/2014].
[78] Ibid.
[79] Pataraia, T. (ed.) (2010), "Democratic Control over the Georgian Armed Forces since the August 2008 War," Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Switzerland, pp. 8-9.
[80] Pukhov, *The Tanks of August*, p. 38.
[81] Fishel, J. (1995), "Little Wars, Small Wars, LIC, OOTW, The GAP, and Things That Go Bump in the Night," *Low Intensity Conflict and Law Enforcement*, 4:3, pp. 372-398.
[82] "Russia's rapid reaction."

Nevertheless, Georgian forces were unprepared for defensive operations, with the exception of an effective air defence umbrella. The most striking evidence of this unpreparedness was the apparent absence of provisions towards either securing or blocking the Roki tunnel (the only ground route from Russia to South Ossetia) through which Russian reinforcements had to be deployed in the event of war. In August 2008, the Georgian artillery lacked the equipment with the precision and range to cover the exit of the tunnel.[83] Therefore, while the 2004 crises were well assessed by Georgian military planners, one can only wonder about the apparent lack of preparedness for an active Russian involvement in future encounters.

Georgia's emphasis on air defences indicates that Russian fighter jet incursions were in fact anticipated, though the possibility of a full scale assault by Russian troops was absent from their calculations. Indeed, throughout core Georgian policy texts, such as the National Security Concept (NSC) and the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) documents, the potential for a large scale offensive by another country against Georgia is explicitly mentioned as a low probability scenario.[84] More specifically, throughout the NSC document, which describes Georgia's grand strategy, hostilities in the secessionist provinces are assessed as very likely, while a direct Russian attack is considered unlikely.[85]

The NSC document was completed in 2005 and updated in 2007, without any meaningful amendments regarding the source, or the intensity of security threats Georgia faced. Finally, the Strategic Defence Review (SDR) document, adopted

[83] Cohen, A. and R. Hamilton (2011), "The Russian Military and the Georgia War: Lessons and Implications, Strategic Studies Institute, United States Army War College, p. 25, available at www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/summary.cfm?q=1069, [accessed 12/02/2015].
[84] Pukhov, *The Tanks of August*, p. 12; Pataraia, "Democratic Control over the Georgian Armed Forces since the August 2008 War," pp. 8-16.
[85] Pataraia, "Democratic Control over the Georgian Armed Forces since the August 2008 War," pp. 8-9.

in November 2007, outlines Georgia's future security challenges and describes the country's defence priorities and needs. In the risk assessment part, a large scale military intervention is, once again, deemed a low probability scenario (Table 8-A). After the end of the 2008 conflict, Georgian deputy Defence Minister Batu Kutelia admitted to the Financial Times that there had been no planning for facing a potential Russian involvement in the conflict.[86]

Table 8-A: Threat Categories and Risk Assessment, Georgian Strategic Defence Review, November 2007

Threat categories	Current conflict potential	Conflict potential trend	Warning and preparation time	Impact on vital interests
Large-scale military intervention	Very low	On the decrease	Plenty	Catastrophic
Conflicts in breakaway regions	Quite high	On the increase	Little	Significant
The overspill of violence from North Caucasus	Low	On the increase	Plenty	Moderate
The overspill of violence from South Caucasus	Quite low	On the increase	Little	Moderate
International terrorism	High	On the increase	Little	Moderate

Source: Pataraia. 2010, p. 16.

The lack of diversity in assessments and estimates among the Georgian leadership is surprising, considering the risk associated with this strategy. A reason, perhaps,

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[86] "Tbilisi Admits it Miscalculated Russian Reaction", *Financial Times*, Aug 22 2008.

for this unproductive consistency of expectations can be sought in the composition of the decision making elite. Other than Saakashvili, the undisputed protagonist and main decision making figure of the crisis, Irakli Okruashvili, a hardliner who was Minister of Interior during the 2004 crisis, was appointed Minister of Defence in December 2004. From 2006 until December 2008, the position of Defence Minister was occupied by Davit Kezerashvili, a young and inexperienced politician, who essentially carried out Saakashvili's instructions. Moreover, Ivane Merabishvili used to be Saakashvili's National Security Advisor until June 2004 when he was appointed to the position of Minister of State Security. In December 2004, the Ministry of State Security was merged with the Ministry of Internal Affairs of which Merabishvili was placed in charge, a position he retained until 2012.[87] Overall, individuals in charge during the 2004 crisis in South Ossetia were either present or upgraded in the 2008 war, creating a cohesive group of actors.

Military leaders were equally oblivious. The Georgian Chief of the Joint Staff, Brigadier General Zaza Gogava, informed a Georgian parliamentary commission set up to investigate the war that the country's intelligence "was not comprehensive enough to indicate that such a large scale Russian military intervention was to be expected."[88] This lack of preparedness became evident in the summer of 2008. After approximately 72 hours of combat, Georgian troops were retreating in a highly unorganized manner, abandoning operational equipment (including 44 T-72 tanks) in the process.[89] The belief that Russia would not attack could possibly account for the fact that Georgian forces were "taken

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[87] "New Cabinet Wins Confidence Vote," December 28 2004, Civil news website, available at http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=8678&search=Merabishvili, [accessed 02/02/2015].
[88] Cornell and Starr, *The Guns of August* 2008, p. 153.
[89] "Russia's rapid reaction."

completely by surprise by the arrival of the Russians."[90] In one of the most detailed scrutinies of the 2008 war thus far, Wivel and Mouritzen converge on the view that the Georgian leadership underestimated Russia's capacity and willingness to respond through the application of large scale force.[91]

The Georgian assessment, while extremely biased and unfounded in retrospect, can be traced back to the 2003-2004 crises which shaped Georgian expectations. What would have happened had Georgia captured South Ossetia in 2004? One can only speculate, but the truth is that most signals and indications pointed to a moderated Russian response at the time. Between 2004 and 2008, however, a series of powerful signals coming from Moscow were ignored by Tbilisi. At the same time, Georgian policy makers did not appear keen to reassess the wider geopolitical changes underway during that period. Georgian perceptions gradually became less accurate, as they were not informed by strong signals and major international developments that could (and should) have been noticed and analysed by the country's leadership. As a result, Georgian actions in 2008 were doomed to fail, as they were informed by a set of obsolete assumptions.

8.8: Signals from Moscow

Before one ascertains that Georgian policy makers operated under misperceptions in the 2008 crisis and the ensuing war with Russia, the clarity of Russian signals through statements and actions needs to be assessed. After all, Russia has used ambiguity in the past in order to attain its strategic goals. Thus, a plausible

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[90] Labarre, "Sustainable Armor Capability for Small Powers," p. 103.
[91] Mouritzen, H. and A. Wivel (2012), *Explaining foreign policy: international diplomacy and the Russo-Georgian war*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, p. 77.

explanation of the Georgian blunder in 2008 would be to suggest that Saakashvili merely "took the bait" and started a confrontation sought by Moscow. At first glance, Russian signals in the run up to 2008 were ambivalent indeed. From the onset of the joint peacekeeping operation in South Ossetia until 2008, Ossetians often criticized Russian peacekeepers for being overly passive towards ceasefire violations.[92] In an International Crisis Group interview, Russian diplomats indicated their preference for moderation by citing that the cornerstone of their strategy was "a long history of respect to the peacekeeping role of Russia in the Caucasus."[93] Meanwhile, the South Ossetian JPKF registered 1707 ceasefire violations between October 1 2006 and April 1 2007 alone, the majority of which were committed by Georgia.[94]

Other clues may have also imbued the belief that Russia would not openly intervene in case of hostilities. On May 31 2005, Georgian Foreign Minister Salome Zourabichvili and her Russian counterpart, Sergei Lavrov, signed an accord for the closure of two Russian bases in Georgia, (at Batumi and Akhalkalaki), effectively ending a long-term presence of the Russian army in Georgian soil.[95] This retrenchment of the Russian presence in Georgia followed Moscow's conciliatory stance during the Ajara crisis in 2003, in which it reluctantly accepted the end of Russian involvement in a strategically located Georgian province. Finally, Russia's tacit acceptance of the widening capabilities gap between Abkhazia and South Ossetia on the one hand and Georgia on the

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[92] International Crisis Group interview of the South Ossetian de facto Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tskhinvali, February 2007, cited in "Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly," p. 4.

[93] International Crisis Group interview of a Russian embassy official, Tbilisi, March 2007, cited "Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly," p. 4, footnote 23.

[94] Data provided to the International Crisis Group by the Joint Peacekeeping Force Commander, Tskhinvali, March 2007, cited in "Georgia's South Ossetia Conflict: Make Haste Slowly," p. 4.

[95] "Some in Georgia Worry that the Russian Base Withdrawal Deal Comes with a Catch," Eurasianet, May 31 2005, available at www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav060105.shtml, [accessed 10/02/2015].

other, could only amplify Georgian expectations that Moscow would not be directly involved in what was viewed in Tbilisi as Georgian internal affairs.

However, Moscow's ambivalence gave way to a firm stance indicating its opposition to unilateral actions in Georgia's restive provinces. In this regard, the apparent non-impact of signals sent by Russia through both statements and actions is surprising. In early 2008, Russian and Abkhaz leaders made assertive statements on the status of the Kodori gorge (the only part of Abkhazia under Georgian control at the time), with the Russian air force shooting down a Georgian drone flying over the area.[96] By the spring of 2008, Russian fighter jets and UAVs had started undertaking incursions over the South Ossetian ceasefire line.[97] On April 16 2008, Vladimir Putin signed a decree for the establishment of direct diplomatic and political links to Georgia's separatist provinces.[98] This move undermined the prospect of their reintegration to Georgia through a negotiated settlement. Russian reinforcements were also dispatched to Abkhazia in April under the peacekeeping agreement, consisting of an air-borne battalion, thereby significantly upgrading the province's war fighting capacity.[99]

The July 2008 escalation did not appear to affect Georgian perceptions. On the contrary, in the run up to August 8, Georgian calculations seemed consistent with pre-crisis perceptions. Before mid-July, for instance, various military divisions in Russia expressed their readiness to provide support to Russian peacekeepers if the Georgian army escalated.[100] In June and July 2008, members of the Russian

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[96] Cornell, S. (2008), "War in Georgia, Jitters All Around," Current History, 107:711, p. 310.
[97] Pataraia, "Democratic Control over the Georgian Armed Forces since the August 2008 War," p. 9.
[98] Cornell, "War in Georgia, Jitters All Around," p. 310.
[99] Cohen and Hamilton, "The Russian Military and the Georgia War," p. 17.
[100] "Commentary Concerning the Situation in South Ossetia," Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, July 10 2008, available at

military undertook repairs in the railway network of Abkhazia, which would enable the rapid deployment of Russian reinforcements.[101] On July 8, during the visit of US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in Georgia, four Russian Su-24 fighter jets flew over South Ossetia for about forty minutes, an incident that Moscow moved to openly acknowledge.[102]

The Georgian government did not perceive these indications as a sign of Russian resolve. In mid-July 2008, the Georgian President rejected the German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier's plan, aimed at de-escalating tensions in Abkhazia. The Georgian government made it clear that it would not renounce the use of force as long as Russian provocations continued.[103] In multiple instances, the Georgian government did not hesitate to include the use of force in its range of responses if its "red lines" in the separatist provinces were crossed.[104]

Finally, some 8,000 Russian troops took part in the exercise "Kavkaz 2008" across the North Caucasus in July 2008, including North Ossetia.[105] For at least the preceding two years before 2008, the Russian North Caucasus military command and the Black Sea Fleet conducted exercises in the area under the scenario of repelling a Georgian attack on Russian peacekeepers based in Georgia.[106] After the end of the manoeuvres in the early hours of August 2 2008, Russian forces did not return to their barracks, but remained in the vicinity in a state of readiness.

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http://www.mid.ru/brp_4.nsf/0/D87CF4C1A75524E3C3257483001C43AF, [accessed 05/06/2013]; Interfax, July 10 and August 4 2008, cited in Welt, "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict," p. 93.

[101] Rahman, "Georgia and Russia: What Caused the August War?," p. 138.

[102] Cohen and Hamilton, "The Russian Military and the Georgia War," p. 20.

[103] "Georgia pokes holes in German peace plan", *The Local*, July 18 2008, available at http://www.thelocal.de/20080718/13135, [accessed 08/09/2014].

[104] Asmus, R. (2010), *A Little War that Shook the World: Georgia, Russia, and the Future of the West*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 30.

[105] "Russia's rapid reaction."

[106] "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests," Congressional Research Service Report, United States Congress, March 2009, p. 3.

Logistic support was, moreover, already in place.[107] Concurrently, the Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol raised its level of preparedness.[108] In the afternoon of August 7, Georgian forces were mobilized and closed in on South Ossetian borders, causing an almost concurrent mobilization of Russian forces located on the other side of the Roki tunnel connecting North and South Ossetia.[109]

Many analysts consider the deployment of 1,200 Russian tanks within a few hours of the onset of hostilities as an indication that Russia's actions were prearranged. While it is unlikely that Russia planned a war, it was certainly preparing for one and it was hardly hiding it. The Russian military prioritized improving its capacity to manage localized wars and insurgencies in the Caucasus. Two mountain troop brigades had been established within the North Caucasus Military District (NCMD) and a number of units, mostly comprised of professional soldiers, were set on a permanent readiness status.[110] Their training activities emphasized joint operations with various forces in the region, indicating the Russian desire to respond promptly to diverse contingencies.[111] It has to be noted that the Dagomys Accords ending the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in the early 1990s conferred extensive powers to the peacekeeping forces, including "the right to bar the entry into the conflict zones of military groups, to use force against violators of the ceasefires, and to pursue them beyond the conflict zones."[112]

The variety and strength of signals coming from Russia in the months, weeks and days before the outbreak of hostilities would lead observers to sincerely question

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[107] "Russia's rapid reaction."
[108] Cornell, "War in Georgia, Jitters All Around," p. 311.
[109] Welt, "The Thawing of a Frozen Conflict," p. 94.
[110] Vendil Pallin, C. and F. Westerlund (2009), "Russia's war in Georgia: lessons and consequences," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20:2, p. 405.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Petro, "The Russia-Georgia War."

the salience of the deterrence concept. From statements establishing clear intentions to military manoeuvres especially designed to convey credibility, Moscow appears to have tried hard to avert the 2008 war. Lebow may have a point when he asserts that "Deterrence theorists tend to ignore difficulties that might be associated with the actual signalling process…Everyone is thought to understand, so to speak, the meaning of fierce guard dogs, barbed wire and 'No Trespassing' signs. In practice, however, this may not be so."[113]

After 2004, ensuring local superiority against existing forces in the breakaway provinces was probably viewed in Tbilisi as both a necessary and sufficient condition for success.[114] The Georgian security strategy seems to have been forged under a firm belief that Russia would not go beyond a concealed reinforcement of Ossetian militias. Actions on the ground support this notion, as the Georgian army did not hesitate to target lightly armed Russian peacekeepers at a Russian base, who apparently did not pose a substantial threat.[115] Finally, the use of multiple rocket launchers in a densely populated area such as the South Ossetian capital was certain to cause a high number of non-combatant casualties. Moscow had repeatedly warned Tbilisi that it considered South Ossetians to be Russian citizens (Russian passports were being issued to South Ossetians since 2002) and that action would be taken, should they be targeted.[116]

Medvedev accordingly wondered: "Only a madman could have taken such a gamble. Did he [Saakashvili] believe Russia would stand idly by as he launched

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[113] Lebow, R. (1985), "Conclusions," in R. Jervis et. al. (eds.), *Psychology and Deterrence*, Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, p. 205.
[114] Labarre, "Sustainable Armor Capability for Small Powers," p. 102.
[115] Antonenko, "A War without Winners," p. 24.
[116] Ibid, p. 23.

an all-out assault on the sleeping city of Tskhinvali, murdering hundreds of peaceful civilians, most of them Russian citizens?"[117] Russia's response belied Georgian calculations; not only did it sent reinforcements to South Ossetia, but also deployed its air force, opened a second front in Abkhazia and mobilized its Black Sea fleet, catching Georgia completely unprepared in the process.

8.9: Signals from Allies and Geopolitical Considerations

Georgia's overconfidence may have been generated not only by Russian actions, (or lack thereof in previous interactions) but also by third party behaviour. It was suggested, specifically, that Saakashvili may have held the conviction that either NATO or the US would run to Georgia's aid, should the situation escalate. There is little doubt that both the US and NATO favoured Georgia. While in April 2008 NATO did not accord Tbilisi with a "Membership Action Plan", the Council[118] affirmed that both Georgia and Ukraine would eventually become members and that the parties would "now begin a period of intensive engagement with both at a high political level."[119] During the crisis of July 2008, moreover, the Georgian army along with 1000 U.S. troops and forces from Azerbaijan, Ukraine and Armenia conducted an exercise (named "Immediate Response 2008") in Georgia aimed at increasing interoperability for NATO operations.[120]

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[117] Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, writing in the *Financial Times*, August 27 2008.
[118] The North Atlantic Council is the principal political decision-making body within NATO, comprised of high-level representatives of each member country.
[119] "Bucharest Summit Declaration," issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Bucharest on April 3 2008, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_8443.htm, [accessed 20/01/2015].
[120] "Russia-Georgia Conflict in South Ossetia: Context and Implications for U.S. Interests," p. 3.

For some, such statements and actions represented a thinly veiled intention to back Georgia's military foray and a number of Western analysts believe that false expectations were generated. Indeed, it was noted that it was "irresponsible, unethical and above all contemptible" for NATO to extend security guaranteed to states the alliance does not intend to defend.[121] Finally, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice appeared on July 10 2008 beside Saakashvili in Tbilisi, and asserted "Mr. President, we always fight for our friends."[122] Even though her statement was referring to Georgia's bid for NATO membership, it could have been perceived as a tacit encouragement of Georgian actions, if not an endorsement of the impending operation and a promise of support on the ground.

There is a number of indications that Saakashvili did actually anticipate the West's involvement in the Russo-Georgian crisis. The Georgian President certainly portrayed the conflict as a war "for the West."[123] However, these public signals should not obscure the evidence indicating that Washington had repeatedly signalled its opposition to any unilateral Georgian actions. US State Department official Matthew Bryza warned the Georgian President hours before the Georgian operation that he should not initiate hostilities and fall in the Russian trap.[124] Apparently, the George W. Bush administration had also warned Tbilisi against taking action in the separatist provinces[125] asserting that American support could

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[121] "The West shares the blame for Georgia," *Financial Times*, August 13 2008.

[122] "The United States Shares the Blame for the Russia-Georgia Crisis", US News, August 12 2008, available at http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2008/08/12/the-united-states-shares-the-blame-for-the-russia-georgia-crisis, [accessed 09/11/2014].

[123] "The War in Georgia is a War for the West," article by Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili at *The Wall Street Journal*, August 11, 2008.

[124] "Matthew Bryza: "Mikhail Saakashvili's decision to deploy troops in South Ossetia was a wrong step,"" Azeri-Press Agency, September 11 2008, cited in Ellison, "Russian Grand Strategy in the South Ossetia War, p. 355.

[125] Interview of senior official of the Bush Administration who requested anonymity, October 2009, Washington DC, cited in Cohen and Hamilton, "The Russian Military and the Georgia War," p. 18.

not be taken for granted. Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried, also emphasized to the Georgian government that "the use of military force, even in the face of provocations, would lead to disaster."[126]

What makes the misperception hypothesis even more plausible is the timing chosen by the Georgian leadership to launch its coercive operation, as a number of developments between 2004 and 2008 had rendered brinkmanship a highly risky strategy. In Russia's "near abroad," relations between Russia and Ukraine deteriorated rapidly following the "Orange Revolution" of 2004, which brought to power the pro-Western government of Victor Yushchenko. Russia's response to what it considered to be a Western encroachment was decisive. Moscow temporarily cut off gas supplies in 2006 and increased its pressure through the Russian-leaning constituencies of Eastern Ukraine, in an effort to delay, if not derail, Ukraine's path towards EU and NATO membership. Kiev responded by submitting a request for a NATO "Membership Action Plan" (MAP) in January 2008.[127] During the NATO 2008 summit in Bucharest, a number of allies, led by the UK and Poland, supported the provision of MAPs for both Georgia and Ukraine, though a strong opposition, spearheaded by Berlin, blocked the motion, as the deepening of relations with Moscow was deemed a priority at the time.[128]

The "loss" of Ukraine was detrimental, among others, to Russia's energy interests, as Ukraine had traditionally been part of the route of Russian gas supplies to Europe. Moscow's position was further compromised by the inauguration of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline in May 2005, which transports Caspian Sea oil

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[126] Blank, S. (2008), "From Neglect to Duress: The West and the Georgian Crisis Before the 2008 War," in Cornell and Starr, *The Guns of August 2008*, p. 118.
[127] "Anxious Neighbours," Strategic Comments, 14:7, 2011.
[128] Asmus, *A Little War that Shook the World*, p. 119.

to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, bypassing Russia (Figure 8-D). Finally, US-Russian relations had also taken a turn for the worse. The Missile Defence plan sought to place missile assets near Russian borders, while the declaration of Kosovo's independence in 2008 exacerbated Russian fears of American indifference, if not hostility, to "legitimate" Russian concerns. In February 2008, during a meeting between Saakashvili and Putin, the Russian President allegedly warned his Georgian counterpart: "You know we have to answer the West on Kosovo and we are very sorry but you are going to be part of that answer."[129]

Figure 8-D: The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Oil pipeline

Source:www.bp.com/liveassets/bp_internet/globalbp/STAGING/global_assets/images/locations/caspian/map_pipeline_caspian_594x370.gif

Influenced by adverse dynamics, Russian foreign policy was gradually inclined to a more assertive stance, indicated by Putin's 2007 verbal attack in Munich

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[129] Ibid, p. 106.

against what was perceived to be a concerted Western effort to encroach on Russia.[130] Starting in early 2008, Russian statements regarding the status of the Crimean peninsula indicated that Moscow viewed the change of borders in the region under an increasingly positive prism.[131] On April 16, 2008, Moscow authorized direct relations between Russia and South-Ossetia and Abkhazia.[132]

Georgian policy makers should at the very least have entertained the possibility that Russia's prior retrenchment from the Caucasus was to be reverted. In this regard, Georgia may have provided Moscow with an ideal opportunity to effectively draw lines in its periphery[133] and establish a stronger presence across potential flashpoints. Overall, the four years between 2004 and 2008 had altered the set of geopolitical parameters in which decisions were made. And Georgia was not a "simple" post-Soviet neighbour anymore but a piece of a wider, contested chessboard in which opposing interests clashed. By capitalizing on Georgian misperceptions, Russia sent a powerful signal indicating its "red lines" within its sphere of influence that would set the scene for geopolitical developments in the coming years.

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[130] "Putin's Prepared Remarks at 43rd Munich Conference on Security Policy," *The Washington Post*, February 12 2007.
[131] See for instance "Fears That Crimea Could Be Next Flashpoint for Conflict with Russia," Radio Free-Europe/Radio Liberty, August 24 2008, available at www.rferl.org/content/Crimea_Flashpoint_For_Conflict_With_Russia/1193380.html, [accessed 02/09/2013]; "NATO was sold to a blocking stake," (in Russian) *Kommersant* daily, July 4 2008, available at http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/877224, [accessed 09/09/2014].
[132] Makarychev, A. (2008), "NATO and Russia after the Bucharest Summit," *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo*, no 19, available at http://www.ponarseurasia.org/sites/default/files/policy-memos-pdf/pepm_019.pdf, [accessed 20/01/2015].
[133] See for example Mouritzen and Wivel, *Explaining Foreign Policy.*

Chapter 9:

The Cyprus S-300 Missile Crisis

9.1: Introduction and Historical Background

Cyprus is a strategically located island in the Eastern Mediterranean, located 90 km. south of Asia Minor and 110 km. west of the Levant. The Republic of Cyprus has been a sovereign state since it gained its independence from British colonial rule in 1960, with the United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey enjoying the status of guarantor powers of Cypriot independence, security and territorial integrity. In 1963, however, Cyprus's integrity was scarred by the beginning of inter-communal strife. Tensions between the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities arose, as certain provisions of the 1960 constitution,[1] which sought to establish a consociational democratic system, were deemed unacceptable by the Greek-Cypriot majority, which comprised 77% of the island's total population.

The ensuing stalemate was followed by the withdrawal of Turkish-Cypriots from governmental institutions, resulting in a de-facto administrative division. This precarious equilibrium lasted until 1974, when the Turkish army, in response to a short-lived coup engineered by the junta in Athens, invaded Cyprus and established an occupied zone covering one third of the island's territory. Greek-Cypriots living in the north sought refuge in the south and Turkish-Cypriots fled to the north, seeking the protection of

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[1] Under the 1959 Treaties of Zurich and London, an independent, bi-communal state was established with Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom as its guarantor powers. These agreements specified the division of powers within the bi-communal state.

Turkish armed forces. In 1983, Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash unilaterally declared independence for the "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" (TRNC) which, to this day, remains unrecognised by the international community.

Since the partition of the island in 1974, the Republic of Cyprus has devoted substantial resources to building its security apparatus. Meanwhile, Turkey has established a considerable military presence in the northern part of the island. Today, Cyprus, whose population barely exceeds the million mark, is one of the most militarized spots in the world. Turkish mainland troops on the island are estimated at 36,000, with the Turkish-Cypriot security forces numbering 5,000 servicemen (plus a reserve force of 26,000), while the Greek-Cypriot National Guard consists of 10,050 servicemen (plus a reserve force of 50,000), supported by a Greek contingent of about 2,000 soldiers. The United Kingdom retains a significant presence of about 3,500 troops stationed at its two sovereign military bases and the United Nations rely on an 860-strong peacekeeping force deployed throughout a buffer zone.[2]

Ever since the partition of the island, numerous rounds of negotiations failed to bridge the gap between the two communities with regards to the modus operandi of a united Cyprus, even though the majority of political parties across both sides agree that a bi-zonal, bi-communal federated structure would constitute an acceptable arrangement. In general, Turkish-Cypriots have been seeking a solution based on a loose confederative structure, where

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[2] International Institute for Strategic Studies (2013), *The Military Balance 2010*, London: IISS, 2013; The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus, available at http://www.unficyp.org, [accessed 02/02/2015].

they would enjoy a high degree of autonomy, whereas Greek-Cypriots aim at a more cohesive, integrated federation. Further differentiations exist, with Turkish-Cypriots pursuing a status of political equality between the two communities (as opposed to a proportional system) and the maintenance of security guarantees based on Turkey's right to intervene. On their part, Greek-Cypriots insist on a full withdrawal of Turkish forces and settlers (now comprising a large proportion of the population in the north) and prioritize the principle of free movement and the return of property to its rightful owners.

On January 4 1997, the governments of the Republic of Cyprus[3] and the Russian Federation signed an agreement for the sale of the S-300 PMU-1 Surface to Air Missile (SAM) system[4] to Cyprus.[5] What ensued were a fierce Turkish reaction and a subsequent mobilisation of diplomats and political leaders in Athens, Ankara and Nicosia, with the aim of averting a Turkish assault on Cyprus, or worse, an all-out war between Greece and Turkey. A dangerous leap in a geopolitically overheated region, the deal led to greatly heightened tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, which lasted until the final days of 1998, when the Cypriot President, Glafkos Clerides, announced that the SAMs would instead be deployed on the Greek island of Crete. Variously attributed to a multitude of causal factors, the decision not to

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[3] Unless otherwise stated, the terms "Cyprus", "the Government of Cyprus" and all terms denoting a legal personality refer to the internationally recognised government of the island. The de-facto entity in the north, the self-proclaimed "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" refers to the area in which the Cypriot government does not exercise effective control following the Turkish invasion, and which remains unrecognised by the international community, with the exception of Turkey.

[4] NATO designation: SA-20A Gargoyle.

[5] "On divided isle of Cyprus, missile deal widens rift," *New York Times,* 18/01/1997.

install the missiles, which marked the end of the crisis, has been the subject of speculation and controversy ever since.

Undoubtedly, the decision of the Cypriot leadership to capitulate and annul the delivery of the missiles contributed to regional stability, but the outcome of the crisis was widely viewed as a defeat and policy failure by Cypriot and external analysts, as Cyprus did not succeed in either enhancing its security vis-à-vis Turkey or acquiring diplomatic gains related to the political stalemate in the island. On the contrary, the Cypriot gamble left the reputation of the government tarnished and endangered a conflagration from which Greek-Cypriots were unlikely to benefit. A consensus, however, on the exact causes the adverse crisis outcome remains elusive, with highly diverse narratives focusing on factors such as the fear of a military strike by Turkish forces, the diplomatic involvement of third parties, including Greece and the United States, the reinvigoration of the peace process, or even domestic political calculations among Greek-Cypriot political leaders.

In the following sections, the S-300 crisis will be thoroughly assessed, along with perceptual factors that may have contributed toward its problematic management and eventual outcome. Through evaluating leadership perceptions before, during and after the crisis, a novel narrative will be advanced, suggesting that it was an accurate re-evaluation of Greek intentions that brought about the abandonment of the S-300 endeavour. Severe crises, it will be supported, may force leaders to reassess their perceptions to more accurately reflect both allied and adversary motivations. In that sense, the decision not to proceed with the purchase of the S-300

system may have been the result of a rational recalibration of Cypriot perceptions, taking into account hitherto unnoticed developments.

9.2: The Crisis

Following a number of press leaks, Cypriot Foreign Minister Alekos Michaelides announced himself the purchase of the S-300 SAM system on January 5, 1997. While initially undisclosed, it was later revealed that the agreement included the delivery of four firing batteries, each capable to carry twelve rockets.[6] Turkish officials moved quickly to denounce the sale, openly accusing the Cypriot government of aggression, alleging that the missiles posed a threat not only to Turkish Cypriots but also to Turkey itself.[7] Calling on the Cypriot government to annul the deal, Turkish Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan asserted that Turkey would not passively wait for the coming sixteen months, the declared time-frame for the missiles' deployment.[8] At a press conference, then Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller took a further escalatory step, by openly declaring that Turkey would destroy the SAMs, should they reach Cypriot soil.[9]

Turkish analysts perceived the Cypriot initiative as an indicator of future aggression against Turkish forces, suggesting that the SAMs would provide Greek-Cypriots with a first-strike capability, assumed to be part of a "rapid,

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[6] *Jane's Intelligence Review*, October 1997, p. 5; "The Russian S-300PMU-1 TMD System," *CNS Resources on the Missile Crisis over Cyprus*, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 1998, available at http://cns.miis.edu/cyprus/s300tdms.htm, [accessed 18/09/2014].
[7] "Cyprus S-300 Missile Plan Puts Turkey under the Gun," *Defense News*, 13:31, August 1998, p. 19.
[8] Reuters (Rome), 21/01/1997.
[9] "Flashpoint Cyprus," *Newsweek* (international edition), 27/07/1998, p. 26.

concentrated assault… immediately followed by the announcement of a ceasefire and a call for international arbitration."[10] Reports also suggested that the SAMs could be converted to surface to surface missiles and used against targets in Turkey.[11] On January 20 1997, Turkey signed a joint defence agreement with the unrecognized government of the TRNC.[12] Soon Ankara would move to internationalize the incident, in an effort to increase the diplomatic pressure on Cyprus. Throughout the S-300 crisis, Turkish officials emphasized that the Cypriot initiative posed a threat to NATO interests. In a telling analogy, the Turkish Ministry of Defence compared its obligation to prevent the S-300 deployment with that of the US to stop the installation of Soviet missiles in Cuba in 1962.[13]

Turkey's diplomatic campaign brought results, with the mobilization of the international community in an effort to avert an escalation in the Eastern Mediterranean. In June 1997, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan invited the leaders of the two communities to New York for face-to-face negotiations which took place the following month. In August 1997, the two leaders sat at the negotiating table for another round of face-to-face talks in Montreux, Switzerland, which came to an abrupt end when the Turkish-Cypriot leader refused to negotiate until the EU halted accession talks with the Republic of Cyprus.[14] Intense diplomatic activity originating from Washington was also observed in the meantime, with American mediators shuttling between

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[10] "Missiles and the Eastern Mediterranean," Strategic Comments, 4:5, 1998, p. 1.
[11] Liaras, E. (1997), "A European solution?," *Harvard International Review*, 20:1, p. 39.
[12] "Missiles and the Eastern Mediterranean," p. 1.
[13] Demetriou, M. (1998), "On the long road to Europe and the short path to war: Issue-linkage politics and the arms build-up on Cyprus," *Mediterranean Politics*, 3:3, p. 44.
[14] Liaras, "A European solution?," p. 41.

Nicosia, Ankara and Athens in an effort to convince the Cypriot leadership to annul the project, which was perceived by US officials as a "destabilizing mistake."[15] American efforts - initially composed of dispatching State Department officials on ad-hoc missions - were upgraded in June 1997 with the nomination of Richard Holbrooke, the architect of the Bosnian Peace accords, as a US special envoy to Cyprus.[16]

The ineffective diplomatic effort prompted Turkey to flex its military muscle in order to coerce the Cypriot leadership. In August 1997, Turkish authorities stopped and searched the Egyptian vessel "Al-Qusair", after allegedly receiving information that the ship was carrying (S-300) missile parts.[17] Russia would soon take a firm stance by offering assurances that the system would not only be delivered, but would also be deployed under Russian assistance and supervision. Russian military personnel were scheduled to escort the S-300 shipment and provide training and follow-on support after deployment.[18] Georgy Mouratov, the Russian Ambassador to Cyprus, stated in October 1997 that any Turkish interference with the delivery of the SAMs would be met with armed force.[19]

Greek and Cypriot forces conducted large scale military manoeuvres in the island in October 1997 (code-named Nikiforos). The Turkish military was quick to respond and proceeded with fervour to instill a sense of

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[15] Reuters (Athens), 09/01/1997.

[16] Kramer, H. (1997), "The Cyprus Problem and European Security," *Survival*, 39:3, p. 18;

[17] "Flashpoint Cyprus," p. 26.

[18] Kramer, "The Cyprus Problem and European Security," p. 19. According to the Cypriot daily *Simerini* (04/01/1998), approximately 70 Russian military advisors would be accompanying the S-300 to their deployment site. Moreover, according to the Cypriot daily *Phileleftheros* (12/01/1999), Russian officials suggested to deploy two Russian navy ships which would transport the missile system and defend it against a potential attack.

[19] *Cyprus Mail* daily, 11/10/1997.

decisiveness. During the "Toros 97" military exercises, four Turkish frigates, three submarines, two gunboats and a landing craft took part along with 10,000 Turkish troops in a tour de force aimed at instilling Turkey's determination to prevent the S-300 from reaching the island.[20] In the final portion of the manoeuvres, Turkish F-4 and F-16 fighters conducted mock air strikes on S-300 launch pads at Mevlevi, thirty five kilometres west of the divided Cypriot capital of Nicosia.[21] The message was intended to be loud and clear; Turkey would prevent the missiles from being deployed at any cost. For the first time, "cool dogfights" between Greek and Turkish F-16s took place above Cyprus.[22]

Renewed efforts to break the stalemate in the Cyprus problem were undertaken during the first half of 1998, with the Cypriot government dispatching a proposal for the complete demilitarization of the island to the UN, while Turkish Cypriots demanded the formal recognition of the "TRNC" in order to return to bilateral talks.[23] Despite the rising tensions, Greek-Cypriots appeared to support the delivery of the missiles "whatever the cost."[24] It soon became apparent that there was a delay to the original plan, which foresaw delivery of the missiles in July 1998.[25] The Cypriot President, however, seemed determined to proceed with the deal, affirming that "any postponement, suspension or cancellation of the S-300 order would only be raised if certain prerequisites were fulfilled" which entailed a

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[20] "Updates with simulated S-300 attacks," Agence France-Presse, 04/11/1997.
[21] "Turkish Commandos, warplanes, attack mock S-300 missile site," Agence France-Presse, 05/11/1997.
[22] Demetriou, "On the long road to Europe and the short path to war," p. 48.
[23] Ibid, pp. 40, 50.
[24] *Cyprus Mail* daily, 19/05/1998.
[25] Barletta, M. (1998), "Mediterranean Countdown," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* 54:6. p. 12.

"solution or progress which would definitely lead to a solution. An agreement on demilitarization -provided this had the expected results- would constitute progress justifying such a course."[26] Meanwhile, Turkey contemplated potential responses to developments in Cyprus, among which was the development of joint defence structures with the "TRNC."[27]

With the UN negotiations reaching an impasse and the EU seemingly apprehensive towards intervening, the Cypriot position was gradually eroded. During talks with Greek and Cypriot officials in April and May 1998, US Cyprus Special Coordinator Thomas Miller and Richard Holbrooke attempted to convince the Greek-Cypriots that the purchase of the SAMs could trigger a Turkish strike.[28] In the meantime, the US accelerated its delivery of the ATACMs missiles to Turkey, exacerbating fears of imminent hostilities.[29] UN Security Council resolutions 1217 (for the renewal of the mandate of the UN Peace-keeping force) and 1218 (on the good Offices Mission of the UN Secretary General) were welcomed by the US and the EU,[30] but provided little more than goodwill[31], falling short of even the most conservative Cypriot expectations. The Cypriot President visited Moscow on July 11, 1998 and reaffirmed the deal, as Cypriot military officers conducted test fires of the system in a Caspian Sea firing range.[32]

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[26] "Order for Russian S-300 missiles going ahead, spokesman says," Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation Radio, 02/10/1997, 10:30 GMT, translated by the BBC Monitoring Service, 03/10/1997.
[27] Larrabee, S. (1998), "The EU Needs to Rethink its Cyprus Policy," *Survival*, 40:3, p. 26.
[28] "Flashpoint Cyprus," p. 26.
[29] Barletta, "Mediterranean Countdown," p. 12.
[30] Athens News Agency, 28/12/1998.
[31] The first renewed the UN Peacekeeping Force for six months and the second called on Greek and Turkish Cypriots to embrace efforts on confidence-building measures by the UN Secretary General special representative for Cyprus, Dame Ann Hercus.
[32] Ingram, D. (1998), "Commonwealth Update," *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, 87:348, p. 417.

Meanwhile, Greek officials appeared to be on the same page with their Cypriot counterparts. "There is no decision to postpone (deployment of) the S-300 missiles," Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis asserted after discussions in late August 1998 with the Cypriot President. "They serve the defence of Cyprus."[33] In September 1998, however, Ioannis Kasoulides, then Cypriot Foreign Minister, met with his Greek counterpart, Theodoros Pangalos. During the meeting, Pangalos discouraged Casoulides from proceeding with the S-300 deal, allegedly warning that Athens was in no position to defend Cyprus, should the situation escalate.[34] The Cypriot ambassador in Athens allegedly boarded a flight to Cyprus in order to personally relay the message to the Cypriot President.[35]

When the Cypriot President visited Athens anew on November 27, 1998, he came under pressure from the Greek Prime Minister to abandon his missile plans because of "fears that Mr Clerides's brinkmanship could stall accession talks aimed at securing Cyprus's European Union membership in the next wave of enlargement."[36] To take the heat off the Cypriot President, Athens offered to "borrow" the missiles and advocated the resumption of UN-backed talks as a face saving strategy for Clerides, who rejected this proposition, threatening to resign rather than cancel the deal.[37]

Clerides's stance would soon change. During deliberations with the heads of the Cypriot political parties on December 24, the Cypriot President

[33] "Greece to deploy missiles on Cyprus," *The Tampa Tribune*, 28/08/1998.
[34] "Bitter Truths about the S-300," (in Greek), *Simerini daily*, 29/08/2010.
[35] Ibid.
[36] "Cyprus under pressure over missiles," *Financial Times*, 27/11/1998.
[37] ibid.

suggested that a UN resolution on the Cyprus problem was an outcome that could allow the cancelation the S-300 delivery, only to face their staunch opposition.[38] On December 28 1998, the Cypriot President travelled once again in the Greek capital in order to reach a final decision.[39] On the evening of December 29 1998, Clerides announced he had agreed not to install the S-300 missiles but to "negotiate with the Russian government on the possibility of installing them on Crete."[40] Clerides acknowledged that Greece's support for deploying the missiles on Crete weighed heavily in his decision[41], adding that he was "not bowing to international pressure or blackmail" but believed this decision to be "the best for the national interest" of Cyprus and "the broader interests of Hellenism."[42] The Cypriot President cited international reassurances for a settlement on the Cyprus problem.[43] He referred to a Security Council resolution calling for reductions of troops and armaments, expressing his hope that commitments provided by the US President and the British Prime Minister would soon bring results.[44]

9.3: Evaluating Cypriot Perceptions

At first glance, one would expect that Cypriots would perceive an aggravated potential for the outbreak of hostilities during the crisis, as the

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[38] *Voice of America*, 24/12/1998, available at http://fas.org/news/cyprus/981224-cyprus.htm, [accessed 20/01/2015].
[39] *Athens News Agency*, 28/12/1998.
[40] "Cyprus backtracks over missiles," *Financial Times*, 30/12/1998.
[41] "Cyprus, the S-300PMU-1 Missile System, and Regional Security: An Annotated Chronology, 1995-96," *CNS Resources on the Missile Crisis over Cyprus*, James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, 1998, available at http://cns.miis.edu/cyprus/chr9596.htm, [accessed 22/10/2014].
[42] "Cyprus backtracks over missiles."
[43] "Cyprus missile decision sparks resignations," *Financial Times*, 05/01/1999.
[44] "Cyprus backtracks over missiles."

pattern of interaction between Turkey and Cyprus appears consistent with a "security dilemma," where the effort of a state to enhance its "own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure."[45] Indeed, the line of thinking that Cyprus miscalculated the extent of Turkish reactions had a profound impact during, as well as after, the missile crisis.[46] The rise of security dilemmas explains in numerous instances why in an anarchic international system, even nations with "fundamentally compatible goals still end up in competition and war."[47] However, the crisis outcome indicates that Cypriot threat perceptions must have remained moderated, in spite of the tense military activity and escalating rhetoric from Ankara. In retrospect, Turkey's strategy was only natural. In crises involving a fait accompli, escalating statements and actions can be part of a compellence strategy aimed at coercing the other side to retract from a certain course of action that is already unfolding.[48]

During the crisis, however, most analysts concurred that Turkey possessed both the capabilities and the intention to prevent the deployment of the missiles.[49] One would thus forgive Cypriot leaders if they feared a strike by Turkey, particularly as time progressed. Turkey's overwhelming superiority was, after all, well understood in Nicosia, with, or without, the S-300. Excluding the 35,000 Turkish troops stationed in northern Cyprus, 180

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[45] Posen, B. (1993), "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, 35:1, p. 28.

[46] "From Missile Crisis to EU Membership: Cyprus hostage to Athens-Ankara Confrontation," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, English ed., September 1998.

[47] Glaser, C. (1997), "The Security Dilemma Revisited," *World Politics*, 50:1, p. 171.

[48] The concept of "compellence" is similar to the concept of deterrence; like deterrence, compellence aims to manipulate the motives of the enemy in order to affect its behaviour. Unlike deterrence, however, which is concerned with discouraging the adversary from taking a particular course of action, compellence is focused on persuading an enemy to retract/change a particular course of action. See Schelling, T. (1966), *Arms and Influence*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, p. 70.

[49] Kramer, "The Cyprus Problem and European Security," p. 18.

combat aircraft were stationed in south-eastern Turkey at the time of the crisis, within five minutes' flying time of Cyprus.[50] A first strike by Greek-Cypriots would almost definitely provoke a Turkish incursion to the south, with a high probability of success.[51] Indeed, the majority of Turkish analysts shared the view that the overall regional balance overwhelmingly favoured Turkey.[52] Finally, in June 1998, the hardliner Necmettin Erbakan came to power in Turkey. Erbakan was deputy Prime Minister in 1974 when Bulent Ecevit ordered the invasion of Cyprus and was closely associated with Turkey's uncompromising stance on the issue.[53]

Nevertheless, the Cypriot leadership did not seem overly concerned that it would have to face a Turkish offensive. This could be partly related to the specific purchase in question, as Russia's involvement was thought to pose a sufficient deterrent, considering its wider geopolitical implications. Following the end of the Cold War, Turkish elites saw an opportunity to reinstate the country's influence within the former USSR and the Middle East.[54] The collapse of the Soviet Union and the corresponding power vacuum in its former periphery opened the door for Turkey to increase its relative standing in Central Asia, the Caucasus and the Middle East, thereby reclaiming an important role in Eurasia for the first time since the Ottoman

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[50] "Missiles and the Eastern Mediterranean," p. 1.

[51] For a strategic assessment of the Cypriot operational theatre at the time of the S-300 crisis see Lindley, D. (1997), "UNFICYP and a Cyprus Solution: A Strategic Assessment," *MIT Security Studies Program Working Papers*, available at http://web.mit.edu/ssp/publications/working_papers/wp97-1.pdf, [accessed 28/10/2014].

[52] Dunér, B. (1999), "Cyprus: North is North, and South is South," *Security Dialogue*, 30:4, p. 492.

[53] Robins, P. (1997), "Turkish foreign policy under Erbakan," *Survival*, 39:2, p. 87.

[54] Criss, N. and S. Güner (1999), "Geopolitical Configurations: The Russia-Turkey-Iran Triangle," *Security Dialogue*, 30:2, pp. 365-376.

era.[55] NATO enlargement, underway in the mid and late 1990s, was regarded as a complementary tool to Ankara's grand strategy.[56] Despite concerns that expansion might render the alliance's southern flank less important,[57] the reach of western security institutions in a region of great interest to Turkey (the Black Sea) was anticipated to create a "cushion" against Russian resurgence and hence compensate for any potential loss of Turkish influence within the alliance.

Russians regarded Turkey's rapidly developing cultural and security ties with states such as Azerbaijan and Georgia respectively with apprehension. The Russian leadership was particularly alerted by Turkish manoeuvres in the Black Sea with Ukraine and the unfolding Turkish military cooperation with Georgia and Azerbaijan.[58] Exacerbating Russian fears, Turkey's active role in the Abkhazian conflict raised concerns of a potentially destabilizing Turkish involvement in the separatist Russian provinces of Dagestan and Chechnya.[59] Turkey anticipated that the exclusion of Russia from Central Europe might fuel a more assertive Russian stance in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.[60] That fear was soon to be realized. Russia begun to develop and strengthen its security ties to Syria, Iran, Greece and Cyprus, as part of a strategy aimed at countering the expanding Turkish influence.[61]

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[55] According to John Haslam, geopolitics has always been part of Realist thought. See Haslam, J. (2002), *No Virtue like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations since Machiavelli*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, ch. 4.

[56] Karaosmanoglu, A. (1999), "NATO Enlargement and the South: A Turkish Perspective," *Security Dialogue,* 30:2, p. 213.

[57] Ibid, p. 215.

[58] "Turkey, Israel to Enhance Strategic Ties with Caucasus," *Turkish Daily News*, 16/03/1998.

[59] Criss and Güner, "Geopolitical Configurations," p. 367.

[60] Ibid, p. 217.

[61] Ergün Olgun, M. (1999), "Turkey's Tough Neighbourhood," in C. Dodd (ed.), *Cyprus: the Need for New Perspectives*, Huntingdon: Eothen Press, pp. 231-260.

To this end, the supply of advanced weaponry (and missile systems in particular) was to become a preeminent policy tool.[62] At the time, Russia had already deployed Scud-B missiles in Armenia[63] and reportedly assisted Iran in developing 2,000 km range missiles, while the S-300 system was exported to Syria in 1998.[64] Thus, the procurement of Russian weaponry entailed a strategic component that entailed the provision of political and security guarantees, a fact well-known to Ankara. In late 1997, the Turkish General Staff prepared a report for the Turkish government which accorded the S-300 system with a central role in what was perceived to be an "offensive ring" around Turkey's coastline, which included strategically located assets such as ports and oil pipelines.[65]

Therefore, a potential Turkish strike against the Cypriot SAMs would have to be evaluated against a wider geopolitical backdrop, which would render the choice to escalate an almost self-defeating option. Not only would it be unproductive to contemplate a war which could paralyse NATO's - already diminishing in value - southern flank,[66] but it is also equally difficult to fathom that any power, with the possible exception of the United States, would risk to militarize its antagonism with Russia. After the crisis, it was revealed that CIA concurred with the estimate that Turkey would not carry out its threat to strike the SAMs.[67] Allegedly, a Turkish report on the crisis also attests that it would be "practically impossible" to prevent the

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[62] Criss and S. Güner, "Geopolitical Configurations," p. 368.
[63] "Scuds Threaten Shaky Stability," *Jane's Intelligence Review Pointer*, 9:6, 1997, p. 1.
[64] Criss and Güner, "Geopolitical Configurations," p. 368.
[65] "Missiles and the Eastern Mediterranean," p. 1.
[66] Karaosmanoglu, "NATO Enlargement and the South," p. 220.
[67] *To Vima daily*, 03/01/1999.

deployment of the missiles due to Russia's "direct involvement" in the matter.[68] Under this prism, Cypriot calculations appear to have reflected the wider geopolitical realities actors had to face. Finally, Turkish policy planners were contemplating responses (such as the deployment of similar missiles on the "TRNC" and the "Wider Horizon" program, aimed at disrupting communication lines between the Greek island of Rhodes and Cyprus in the event of a crisis) that did not involve striking the S-300s.[69]

The above does not completely rule out a limited use of force by Turkey, but is intended to qualify the available options to Turkey. Cypriots did, in fact, plan for the event that a limited strike against the SAMs occurred. As early as February 1997, the Cypriot government was suggesting that Russian TOR-M1 systems (Russia's sophisticated mid-range antimissile weaponry) would be procured in order to withstand a strike against the SAMs.[70] The Cypriot line of thinking during the crisis is therefore surprising, considering the asymmetrical relationship between Cyprus and Turkey. Indeed, small powers rarely pursue a revisionist agenda against a more powerful opponent.

Preserving the status quo, however, was not the driving force behind Cypriot behaviour. All UN sponsored efforts aimed at reuniting the island had been unsuccessful due to irreconcilable differences between the two sides and Greek-Cypriots were facing the prospect of a status quo that compromised both the island's sovereignty and their security. In any case, Cypriot

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[68] Stylianou, N. (2014), "The S-300 Crisis: Lessons Learned, two Decades Later," (in Greek), available at http://e-amyna.com/2014/12/15/s300-lessons-learned, [accessed 16/12/2014].
[69] "From Missile Crisis to EU Membership."
[70] "Greek Cypriots threaten to up ante in clash over sale of S-300 missiles," *Defense News*, 03/02/1997.

expectations of Turkish, as well as Russian actions do not appear to have taken the Cypriot leadership by surprise at any point during the S-300 crisis.

The possibility also exists that Cyprus miscalculated the reaction of the international community, as it may have expected it to apply more pressure to Turkey. International organizations and other great powers, after all, have always played a major role in shaping Cyprus's destiny. The island's recent history, passing from Ottoman occupation to British colonial rule, is replete with external interventions. The 1960 constitution, which granted the island its independence, reserved for Greece, Turkey and the United Kingdom the right to political and military intervention. Since 1974, the Cyprus issue has known an unprecedented degree of internationalization, due to the conflict potential between two NATO allies and the hands-on involvement of the United Nations on the ground as peacekeepers and at the negotiating table as brokers towards a settlement. The Cypriot government has consistently favoured, if not insisted upon, the involvement of the international community, adopting a negotiating strategy which upholds international law and UN resolutions as a basis for a permanent resolution of the conflict.

It is unlikely, however, that Cyprus looked at the West for support when it decided to purchase the S-300 system. The United States and the United Kingdom are traditionally viewed with distrust, if not hostility, by Cypriot elites and public opinion alike, perceived to be consistently supporting Turkish interests since the end of the Second World War. The United Kingdom had additional interests at stake. The powerful "Tombstone" radar of the S-300, with its range of over 300 km, would have the capacity to monitor Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt and Jordan, providing

Cyprus, a non-NATO member, with intelligence on aircraft movements in the region, including incoming and outgoing flights from the British Akrotiri Sovereign Base.[71] The EU appeared, on its part, wary of the prospect of another conflict in Europe, especially when the disintegration of Yugoslavia had already exposed its institutional and political weaknesses.

The Cypriot leadership did not appear to be surprised by the international reaction to its initiative. On the contrary, throughout the crisis, Cyprus appeared to be well aware of the possibility that the stalemate in the diplomatic front continued. Moreover, the Cypriot government did not hesitate to endanger its EU accession, with anecdotal evidence pointing to a stern warning of a French veto, should the missiles reach Cyprus.[72] On March 18 1998, the Cypriot Foreign Minister met with the Swedish Ambassador in Nicosia (Sweden was one of the more sceptical EU members towards the Cypriot membership). After the meeting, the Cypriot Foreign Minister stated that "…the question of the Cypriot people's security and their defence is as important as their EU accession course. Therefore the one will not be sacrificed for the benefit of the other."[73]

Nicosia had a reason to feel secure about its membership prospects in any case. In March 1995, the EU granted the Republic of Cyprus the status of candidate with negotiations scheduled to start in early 1998, irrespective of

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[71] The Akrotiri base in Cyprus is the UK's biggest overseas military air-base and a key staging post for operations in the Middle East, the Gulf and Africa: "Russian radar base in Cyprus alarms West," *The Guardian*, 19/05/1998, p. 12.

[72] Chatzikostas, K. (2008), "S-300: From the Active Volcano Policy to the Annan Plan," (in Greek), *Apopsi Magazine*, 12/2008, available at http://magazine.apopsi.com.cy/2008/12/1094, [accessed 12/09/2014].

[73] "Statement by the Foreign Minister of Cyprus Regarding the S-300 Missiles," Cyprus News Agency, 18/03/1998.

a solution to the Cyprus problem.[74] It is a well-known secret in Brussels that the Cypriot accession negotiations were a result of a trade-off between Brussels and Athens, in order for the latter to accept Turkey's customs union with the EU as well as the Union's expansion to CEE countries.[75] EU leaders knew that Greece would exercise its veto rights if the next accession wave, to include Central and Eastern European countries, did not include Cyprus.[76] According to the Greek Foreign Minister, it would be "ridiculous" to suppose that Greece would not use its veto powers, should the EU deny Cyprus the right become an EU member.[77]

9.4: Non-Perceptual Factors

At this point, it would be useful to explore the possibility that the missiles were merely a bluff aimed at securing political benefits for the Clerides administration. There are two relevant scenarios here: that Clerides either tried to mobilize the nationalist base of the Cypriot electorate in order to secure his re-election in 1998, or that he tried to mobilize the West in order to renew efforts for a solution to the Cyprus problem. Both possibilities appear to be supported by the crisis outcome: In January 1997, Clerides's initiative appeared to enjoy the overwhelming support of the population, with 94% of Cypriots supporting the missile procurement.[78] Clerides's unwavering support for the missiles was his prominent commitment during

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[74] "Storms in the Med Blow towards Europe," *The World Today*, 54:2, 1998, p. 44.
[75] Robins, "Turkish foreign policy under Erbakan," p. 87.
[76] "Storms in the Med Blow towards Europe."
[77] De Bellaigue, C. (1999), "Conciliation in Cyprus?," *The Washington Quarterly*, 22:2, p. 192.
[78] "S-300 and TOR-M1: Junk worth 500 million," (in Greek), *Politis daily*, 21/04/2012.

the election campaign, setting him apart from the moderate AKEL-supported contender George Iakovou.[79] Clerides had consistently played the "security card" to mobilize support within the domestic political arena as the head of the right wing DISY party.[80] And in the February 1998 elections, Clerides was successful in securing a second term. Throughout the election campaign, the issue of security was prominently featured, with the runner-up Iakovou reluctantly drawn in a public contest measuring the willingness of candidates to build the island's defences.[81]

The second scenario appears equally plausible and has received support by a number of Cypriot commentators.[82] In April 1988, incumbent Cypriot President Spyros Kyprianou failed to win a third term in office and was replaced by the moderate businessman George Vasileiou (backed by the Cypriot left wing AKEL party), who sought to benefit from the Greek-Turkish rapprochement of the late 1980s in order to reach a settlement with the Turkish-Cypriot leadership. While bilateral talks resumed for the first time in recent years, the enthusiasm did not last long, as the peace talks collapsed despite the willingness of Vasileiou to provide concessions in a number of politically sensitive issue areas.[83] Soon enough, Greek-Cypriots began perceiving their approach, primarily based on international law

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[79] Chatzikostas, "S-300: From the Active Volcano Policy to the Annan Plan."
[80] Doukas, G. (1998), "Presidential elections in Cyprus: Clerides's renewed mandate," *Mediterranean Politics*, 3:2, pp. 115-121.
[81] Ibid.
[82] "S-300: How Clerides committed to the Americans," (in Greek), *Apopsi Magazine*, 12/2008, available at http://magazine.apopsi.com.cy/2008/12/1093, [accessed 12/09/2014].
[83] See for example "Cyprus Talks Stalled," *Middle East International*, 358, September 1989, pp. 13-14.

principles and UN resolutions,[84] as disproportionately conciliatory, if not damaging for their future negotiating position.

Thus, public disillusionment served to gather support for an increasingly assertive stance. Cypriots turned to Europe in search of a renewed momentum through the "re-internationalisation" of the Cyprus issue; in 1990, the Cypriot government filed its application for EU membership. The ongoing eclipse of the Cold War and the vision of a strong European Union with a common voice in international politics seemed appealing to Greek-Cypriots, who placed an emphasis on the international standing of the Republic of Cyprus and the democratic values shared among European states, as opposed to Turkey, which was perceived as an authoritarian violator of international law. The "Set of Ideas", a comprehensive package of arrangements prepared after years of consultation by UN representatives on both sides, was put forth by the UN Secretary General Boutros Ghali in 1992. While optimism was prevalent among UN officials, the "Set of Ideas" was rejected by Turkish Cypriots, resulting in a new negotiations deadlock.

With EU accession on the horizon,[85] Greek-Cypriots perceived an opportunity to reach a solution which reflected their vision of a strong federal state.[86] Following its ascension to power in 1993, the DIKO-DISY centre-right coalition led by Glafkos Clerides articulated the condition that common ground should exist before the resumption of talks.[87] The content

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[84] Demetriou, "On the long road to Europe and the short path to war," p. 43.
[85] Cyprus's EU application was lodged in 1990 and accepted by the European Council of Ministers in 1995. Accession negotiations were initiated in 1998.
[86] Liaras, "A European solution?," p. 40.
[87] Demetriou, "On the long road to Europe and the short path to war," p. 43.

of that statement would soon be articulated as a comprehensive strategy. Officially dubbed the "Active Volcano" strategy, the new Cypriot approach sought to mobilise the international community before the situation escalated and control became elusive.[88] The main idea was to portray the status quo as untenable. Official statements indicated this new direction: "We are convinced that time is running out for the Cyprus problem," asserted Cypriot Foreign Minister Alekos Michaelides.[89]

Thus, while the politically motivated "brinkmanship" narrative gained momentum in the years following the S-300 crisis, analysts tend to disregard two crucial and interrelated components that cast doubt on the validity of such interpretations: The evolution of Cypriot security policy in the 1990s and the trajectory of relations between Nicosia and Athens. Starting with the Cypriot security policy, one has to note that the "Active Volcano" strategy possessed a comprehensive military aspect, under which the Cypriot National Guard begun its planning for the creation of a credible deterrent force in lieu of Cyprus's traditional, limited defensive posture in existence since 1974. The new military logic was aimed at rendering Cyprus capable of withstanding a first strike until reinforcements from Greece arrived. The "Active Volcano" was therefore a comprehensive plan which combined a diplomatic drive with a more favourable balance of power, taking advantage of the historically close military relationship with Greece.[90]

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[88] Chatzikostas, "S-300: From the Active Volcano Policy to the Annan Plan."
[89] "On divided isle of Cyprus, missile deal widens rift."
[90] Ifestos, P. (2011), "In Memoriam Giannou Kranidioti," (in Greek), available at http://www.ifestosedu.gr, [accessed 29/11/2014].

Indeed, a closer inspection reveals that the S-300 initiative was not the isolated brinkmanship move analysts had mistaken it for. The Cypriot leadership had been considering the acquisition of an air-defence system since 1995, as Turkish fighter jets had been frequently spotted over the skies of Cyprus. That year, the Turkish military announced the acquisition of 120 MGM-140 Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMs) from the United States; targets in Cyprus could now be taken out from the safety of Turkey.[91]

As the patriot system could not be procured, (the U.S. maintains an arms embargo on Cyprus) Nicosia turned to Russia, a long-term supporter of Greek-Cypriot positions in the UN, eyeing its S-300 system. The 150 km. range SAMs (Figure 9-A) would allow monitoring of the airspace over the entire island, while the associated "Tombstone" radar would provide early warning of any inbound aircraft. The system was also advertised to provide an Anti-Tactical Ballistic Missile (ATBM) capability, thereby affording Cypriots a countermeasure to the ATACMs procured for the Turkish army.

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[91] "Cyprus, the S-300PMU-1 Missile System, and Regional Security: An Annotated Chronology."

Figure 9-A: S-300PMU-1 Missile Range
(The wider ring corresponds to the range of the S-300 radar)
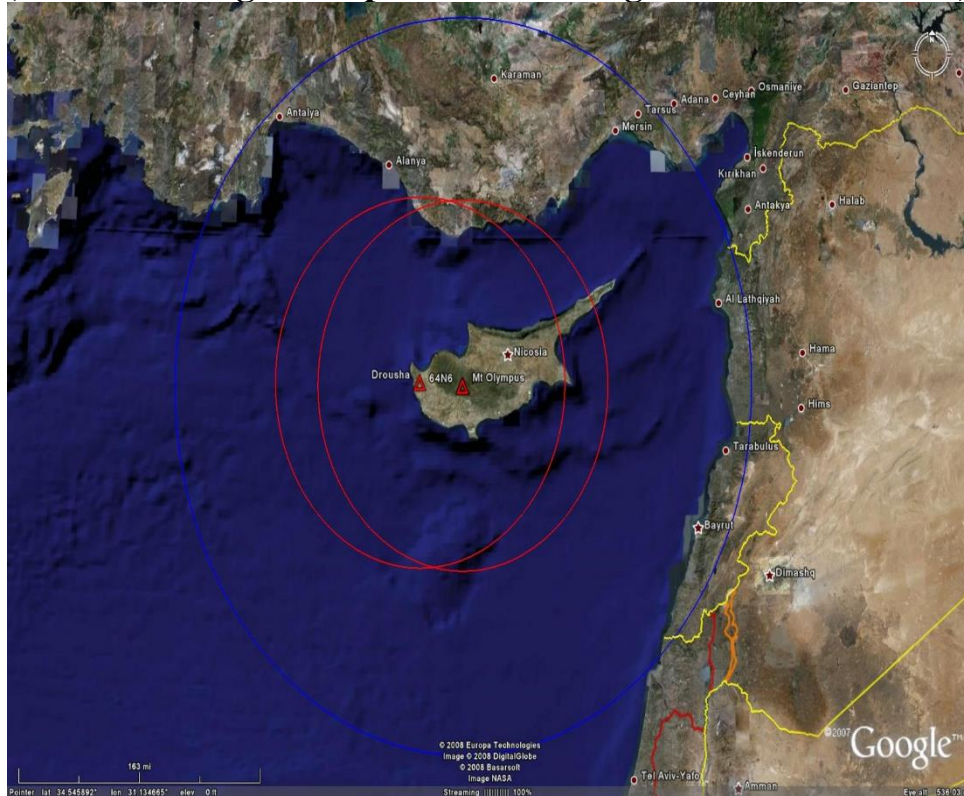
Source: O' Connor, 2008

Ankara's pressure was well anticipated by Cypriots, who forged their strategy on the basis of a win-win scenario; Turkey would either provide concessions towards a settlement on the Cyprus issue (and Turkish Cypriots would enjoy the benefits of EU membership), or the S-300 would be installed. In either case, Cypriot security, elusive since the island's partition in 1974, would be bolstered. Escalation was therefore not only anticipated, but consciously sought by Cypriots as a catalyst for escaping the long-standing political stalemate. The preferred outcome, a negotiated settlement, would soon prove unachievable. Rauf Denktash, the Turkish Cypriot leader, distanced himself from Cyprus's EU accession negotiations, threatening to annex northern Cyprus to Turkey if Cyprus became an EU member.[92]

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[92] "From Missile Crisis to EU Membership."

9.5: Intra-Alliance Perceptions

While domestic calculations are always relevant to a certain degree in international politics, the Cypriot policy failure in 1998 may have come as a result of intra-alliance misperceptions. After all, if the Cypriot leadership anticipated, and even benefited to an extent, from the fierce Turkish reaction, how can one account for the hasty retreat in the eleventh hour? Clearly, the Cypriot strategy failed to deliver in either military or political terms; not only was the missile system never deployed, but to this day, the deadlock over the Cyprus problem persists despite Cyprus's EU accession.

The decisive factor in mismanaging the S-300 crisis and the main cause of the Cypriot strategy failure in general seems to be the discrepancy between Cypriot expectations and reality with regards to Greek intentions. In international politics, small states tend to build their national security strategies on the basis of participation in international institutions[93] and/or military alliances.[94] The historical ties between Greece and Cyprus rendered the bilateral alliance a natural partnership, understood as a duty in Athens, as Greece had disappointed Greek-Cypriots when it proved unable to avert the Turkish invasion in 1974. Cyprus, a traditional security concern in Athens has, especially since the 1974 partition, been regarded as Greece's strategic Achilles' heel. In 1974, due to the political turmoil in Athens and the fact that the Greek defence apparatus relied mainly on land forces in

[93] Wivel, A. (2009), "The Grand Strategies of Small European States," presented at the annual meeting of the ISA's 50th annual convention "Exploring the past, anticipating the future," New York, 15/02/2009, available at http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p311749_index.html, [accessed 03/01/2015].
[94] Rothstein, R. (1968), *Alliances and Small Powers,* New York: Columbia University Press, p. 29.

accordance with NATO operational priorities, Greece proved unable to muster an effective response against the Turkish forces.

In the early 1990s, Greece appeared keen on bolstering its deterrence vis-à-vis Turkey. The Greek-Turkish arms race was taking its toll on Greek finances and it was becoming apparent among decision-makers that Turkey would soon militarily outpace Greece by a considerable margin. Kollias notes that "in real terms, Turkey's equipment expenditure had risen by about 345 per cent in the period 1987–2000. The corresponding increase for Greece was about 142 per cent."[95] It was clear that in the long term, Greece would be unable to keep up in the arms race against Turkey. In the fifteen years following the 1974 Turkish invasion on Cyprus, the Greek defence burden averaged 5.35%, the highest among all NATO and EU members.[96]

Balancing is the key strategy states employ when threatened by the increasing power of a rival. Building up own capabilities (internal balancing) is the most secure approach, as it is based on the notion of self-sufficiency. States, however, can also compensate by joining or forming alliances and coalitions (external balancing) against a rival.[97] Greece, in its effort to cope with an unfavourably shifting balance of power, had to explore strategies of external balancing because "states want to maintain their positions in the system."[98] In particular, Greek extended deterrence in Cyprus was becoming a complicated affair. Dan Lindley correctly notes that "Greece's nearest

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[95] Kollias, C. (2001), "A Look at the Methodological Issues Involved in the Greek-Turkish Arms Race Hypothesis," *Hellenic Studies*, 9:2, p. 109.
[96] Nicolaidou, E. (2008), "The Demand for Military Expenditure: Evidence from the EU15 (1961-2005)," *Defence and Peace Economics*, 19:4, p. 277.
[97] Waltz, K. (1979), *Theory of International Politics*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, p. 118
[98] Ibid, p. 126.

militarily useful islands, Rhodes and Crete, are 300+/- miles away from Cypriot shores. Turkey's relative proximity to Cyprus makes its lines of communication more secure, allows for more rapid reinforcement and resupply, and facilitates air operations."[99]

A more integrated defence posture between Greece and Cyprus was conceived by Greek and Cypriot leaders Andreas Papandreou and Glafcos Clerides (with the Greek Defence Minister Gerasimos Arsenis playing a major part in its conception), as a possible solution to this conundrum.[100] A closer alliance with Cyprus would put additional pressure on Greek resources, but act as a force multiplier. Greek defences would be accorded strategic depth, exposing southern Turkey to Greek air and naval assets stationed on the island. Andreou et al. conclude that "The returns in terms of relative security that Greece derives as a result of its alliance with Cyprus are considerably higher compared with the benefits of its ally."[101] For the Cypriot leadership, a joint defensive doctrine with Greece, combined with increased defence spending, would promote the Cypriot goal of increasing the security of the island, through an upgrading of Cypriot capabilities. It was these developments that led to the creation of the "Integrated Defence Space" doctrine (IDS) in 1993.[102]

The IDS doctrine was used to describe, according to the Greek Ministry of Defence, "a purely defensive dogma, the scope of which is to face any form

[99] Lindley, "UNFICYP and a Cyprus Solution," p. 5.
[100] "From Missile Crisis to EU Membership."
[101] Andreou, A. et. al (2004), "An alliance between Cyprus and Greece: assessing its partners' relative security contribution' *Defence and Peace Economics*, 15:5, pp. 481-495.
[102] The agreement was signed on March 5, 1995 by the Cypriot Minister of Defence Kostas Eliades and his Greek counterpart, Gerasimos Arsenis.

of offensive action against one or both of the allies. It aims, in addition, at defending the strategic and political interests of the two allies in the Aegean Sea and the broader East Mediterranean area in an environment of an arms race against Turkey."[103] In essence, it is an agreement aimed at coordinating military strategy, exercises and equipment between the two allies.[104]

Greek-Cypriot leaders overwhelmingly endorsed the new doctrine. Indicative of the Cypriot thinking was the statement issued by President Clerides in 1998, which read that the Cypriot defence would be bolstered "so that if Attila strikes again, he will not face the situation that existed in 1974. We will be effective, particularly through the implementation of the IDS doctrine between Cyprus and Greece."[105] Contingency planning and coordination between the Greek Army and the Cypriot National Guard had gone on for a number of years. The crucial new element of the IDS, however, was the public acknowledgement and thus the signalling of Greece's commitment to the defence of "Hellenism," which included the Greeks of Cyprus, as opposed to the defence of the territory of the Greek state alone.[106]

The IDS doctrine spearheaded a qualitative leap in Cypriot defensive capabilities, leading to a comprehensive military modernization program, anticipated to cost USD 3.4 billion by 2001.[107] The fact that the Cypriot army lacked air and naval components meant there was an urgent need for equipment complementary to Greek contributions, such as mobile radars,

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[103] "White Paper 2000," Hellenic Ministry of Defence, Athens, Greece.
[104] Demetriou, "On the long road to Europe and the short path to war," p. 43.
[105] Statement issued by the Cypriot Presidency for the commemoration of the dead and missing soldiers of the 256th infantry battalion, Cyprus News Agency, August 2 1998.
[106] Kazamias, A. (1997), "The quest for modernization in Greek foreign policy and its limitations," *Mediterranean Politics*, 2:2, p. 82.
[107] "On the divided island, the armaments spiral escalates faster," (in German), *Handelsblatt,* 13/01/1997.

command, control and communication systems as well as anti-aircraft systems. Without delay, Cyprus initiated the procurement of critical material and created the necessary infrastructure in order to ensure the effectiveness of Greek military support.

It was under these terms that advanced weapon systems such as T-80 tanks[108] and French Exocet anti-ship missiles were procured, while reports indicated that Cyprus intended to purchase KA-50 attack helicopters from Russia.[109] The S-300 missiles, ordered in early 1997, presented for the first time the potential to "overturn Turkish air superiority on the island."[110] Their specific tactical purpose was to provide air cover for a naval base on the island's southern city of Larnaca and the newly constructed airbase "Andreas Papandreou" on the western city of Paphos (completed in March 1998), designed to host, resupply and refuel Greek F-16s.[111]

Cypriot calculations delineate, under this framework, a cohesive strategy. It is unlikely that the "Active Volcano" policy would have been conceived or implemented without the military pillar provided by the IDS doctrine. Emboldened by the strong wording of the pact which states that "Greece will provide air, naval and ground support to Cyprus in the event of Turkish aggression,"[112] the Cypriot leadership aimed at manipulating escalation dynamics to serve its core security imperatives. Would the international

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[108] "Twitchy Turks," *The Economist*, 11/01/1997.

[109] Zaman A. (1997), "Turkey Ready to Raise Stakes in Cyprus Row," Electronic Telegraph, January 21 1997, cited in R. Matthews (1999), "Greek Turkish Tensions Fuel Defence Industrialization," *RUSI Journal*, 144:1, p. 53.

[110] Goldstein, E. (1998), "Greece: The Imperatives of Geopolitics," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 22:1, p. 168.

[111] Tank, P. (2002), "Resolving the Cyprus problem: Changing perceptions of state and societal security," *European Security*, 11:3, p. 154.

[112] "The Military Balance: 1995-1996," Nicosia: Cyprus Centre for Strategic Studies, 1995, p. 54.

community mobilise to support Greek-Cypriot positions, a settlement should render armaments unnecessary. If, on the other hand, the diplomatic deadlock persisted, Greek-Cypriots would attain a historically elusive sense of security through the operationalization of the IDS doctrine.

The S-300 purchase was therefore another step in the realization of a comprehensive grand strategy. In an interview with an Athenian daily, President Clerides provided a clear indication of the true thinking behind the S-300 procurement, when he asserted that "Even without the missiles, the Paphos airport is protected by other systems that have been deployed."[113] His statement echoes prior assessments of the Cypriot leadership, indicating from early 1997 that the missiles were aimed at countering the advantages provided by the close proximity of Turkish forces.[114]

9.6: Tracing Cypriot Misperceptions

Cyprus completed payments for the S-300 to Russia, taking all necessary steps for the deployment of the system, including provisions for training the Cypriot officers who would man and operate the system. Russian personnel even travelled to Cyprus and constructed two sites for the missile systems and an additional site for the associated radars, with all infrastructure designed under the premise that Turkish forces would try to bomb the installations.[115] But while Cypriot leaders were carefully managing their

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[113] *To Vima* daily, 22/02/1998.
[114] Cypriot Foreign Minister Alecos Michaelides on Reuters, 31/01/1997.
[115] "The Cypriot Missile Crisis,", IMINT and Analysis, May 1 2008,
http://geimint.blogspot.com/2008/05/cypriot-missile-crisis.html

risk-prone strategy, they failed to grasp the divergence of Greek and Cypriot priorities, until the Greek government was "forced" to reveal its preferences.

It is now widely recognised that Greece initiated and later consolidated a decisive foreign policy adjustment after 1996, following a Greek-Turkish crisis over the status of the Aegean islets of Imia. By means of EU and NATO encouragement, Athens adopted a more conciliatory approach towards Ankara, ranging from military confidence building measures to the December 1999 relinquishment of the Greek veto to Turkey's bid for EU accession. Turkey's endorsement of democratic norms and values was viewed by Greek elites as a potential catalyst for the abatement of Turkish "aggression."[116] This policy shift was a combination of idealism (a desire to see Greek-Turkish affairs as a positive-sum game) and pragmatism, as in the mid-1990s Greece struggled to cope with its relevant capability decline.

To redress the deteriorating balance of power, Greece announced in 1996 a five-year, USD 17 billion-worth military overhaul program, the biggest procurement program in the history of the Greek armed forces.[117] In appearance, the Greek stance over Cyprus appeared to be unaffected, as the IDS was considered to also promote Greek interests by enhancing the country's deterrence. Cyprus would have few reasons to question the validity of its existing arrangements with Athens. Excluding the fact that the IDS was conceived by Greek policy-makers, the object of the crisis, the S-300 system, had been proposed by the Chief of the Cypriot National Guard

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[116] Makris, S. (2000), "Democratic Peace and Greek Foreign Policy: The Case of Helsinki," (in Greek), *The Society for Social and Economic Studies*, available at http://www.ekome.gr/english/default.asp, [accessed 08/04/2014].
[117] "The procurement programme of the Greek Armed Forces," *Military Technology*, 22:8, 1998.

General Nikolaos Vorvolakos, who was selected from the ranks of the Greek armed forces.[118] The potential for miscommunication appeared to be minimal. The resignation, on January 1997, of Greek deputy Foreign Minister Christos Rozakis, who opposed the IDS pact, acted as an additional signal that Greek intentions had remained unaffected.[119]

Nevertheless, the IDS pact was beginning to be regarded in Athens as militarily unsustainable and diplomatically counter-productive, especially after the 1996 Imia crisis.[120] In this regard, Cypriot leaders may have overlooked a number of indications that were delineating a gradual disengagement of Athens from its commitments. The doctrine of "flexible response," adopted by the Greek military after the Imia crisis,[121] could have posed a first indication that something was about to change in Greek-Cypriot security relations. Emphasizing joint operations between service branches, an increased reliance on rapid reaction forces and the procurement of modern weapon systems, the novel Greek posture envisaged a proportionate reciprocation of hostile actions.

By adopting the doctrine of flexible response in lieu of a deterrence doctrine based on unpredictability and escalation, Greek strategists hoped to respond more effectively in future crises, without facing the daunting dilemma of retreat or an all-out war.[122] Retaliation via Greek forces in Cyprus would

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[118] Chatzikostas, "S-300: From the Active Volcano Policy to the Annan Plan."
[119] Kazamias, "The quest for modernization in Greek foreign policy and its limitations," p. 86; "Guns, not butter," *The Economist*, January 11/01/1997.
[120] "The Responsibilities of Athens," (in Greek), *To Vima* daily, 24/11/1996.
[121] Pikramenos, P. (2006), "A new, offensive doctrine!," (in Greek), *Diplomatia*, vol. 37, November 2006.
[122] With its roots in the Cold War rivalry between the USA and the USSR, the flexible response doctrine aimed at providing a "manageable" set of available responses to both sides so that an immediate recourse to nuclear weapons could be avoided.

undoubtedly lead to a dramatic escalation and that was meant to be avoided. The IDS was thus rather incompatible with the new Greek security posture, which may also explain the absence of IDS-relevant purchases, such as AAW frigates and refuelling aircraft from all new Greek defence procurement programs since 1996.

In March 1997, soon after the beginning of the S-300 crisis, the Greek government accepted NATO Secretary General Havier Solana's confidence building measures in the Aegean, including the extension of an existing exercise moratorium between Greece and Turkey.[123] Around the same time, Greece surprised Ankara by supporting the Turkish bid to become an EU member, opposing European voices that tried to prevent a Turkish EU accession bid. In April, Greece and Turkey agreed to set up a committee, under the auspices of the EU, in order to study bilateral issues and propose possible solutions and arrangements.[124] The 1997 "Madrid Declaration" was the result of a consistent effort by both countries and the mediation of the US State Department, which affirmed that unilateral actions undermining peaceful relations would be avoided by both sides in the Aegean Sea.

The Greek government exerted strenuous efforts to derail the deployment of the S-300 missiles after a certain point. During a visit to Washington D.C. in March 1998, the Greek Foreign Minister Theodoros Pagalos suggested to William Cohen, (then Secretary of Defence) the enactment of a no-fly zone over Cypriot air-space guaranteed by NATO forces in exchange for the non-

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[123] Athanassopoulou, E. (1997), "Blessing in disguise? The Imia crisis and Turkish-Greek relations," *Mediterranean Politics*, 2:3, p. 91.
[124] Ibid, p. 92.

deployment of the missiles. His proposal was deemed unacceptable by both Turkey and the United States, even though American officials appeared eager to discuss the possibility of a NATO-supervised moratorium.[125] While no statements were released from the Cypriot government on the matter, its stance towards a moratorium/no-fly zone had consistently been firm in that this could only be part of an interim arrangement during negotiations.[126]

Nevertheless, safeguarding the hard-earned credibility of extended deterrence provided Greek policy-makers with an incentive to appear adamant on their commitment to the IDS. Moreover, the highly sensitive nature of the Cyprus issue on the collective conscience of Hellenism meant that Greek policymakers would have to face serious domestic political costs should they be viewed as responsible for the abandonment of Cyprus. After all, the political cost of the Greek-Turkish low intensity war had already proven heavy for the Greek government. Costas Simitis had been on the spotlight following the Imia crisis and his political competitors were eager to benefit from any potential "loss" in the realm of Greek-Turkish affairs. The Greek electorate, historically sensitive in issues of national security, had from the early days of the Simitis government shown its distrust towards his capacity to defend Greek interests in the Aegean Sea. This seems consistent with the finding of Guisinger and Smith who maintain that domestic publics tend to punish leaders who are caught bluffing.[127] Combined with reassuring statements by Greek officials, the potential for misperception of Greek

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[125] Cyprus News Agency, 10/07/1998.

[126] Madeleine Albright, then permanent representative of the US in the UN, had first suggested a moratorium during her Cyprus visit during the summer of 1996: Cyprus News Agency, 16/01/1997.

[127] Guisinger, A. and A. Smith (2002), "Honest threats: The interaction of reputation and political institutions in international crises," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 46:2, pp. 175-200.

intentions appears to have been high, if not inescapable. Statements following the end of the crisis point to this direction, after all.

In 2010, Clerides revealed that during the final meeting with Costas Simitis, he was led to believe that Greece had no intention of intervening in case of escalation, as this would endanger Greece's bid to join the European Monetary Union.[128] Years later, the Cypriot Foreign Minister at the time of the crisis, Yannis Kasoulides, assessed that "After the Imia Crisis, the Greek government decided that there should be no pretext provided for a new armed conflict with Turkey. Greek Ministers Pangalos and Kranidiotis asked me to relay the decision of the Greek government that the missiles are installed in Crete as opposed to Cyprus."[129] According to press reports, Simitis warned Clerides that should he insist, the Turks would either attack the Dodecanese islands or march through free Cyprus.[130] Clerides concluded that "Nicosia should always consult with the Greek government so that reckless actions that could involve Greece in conflict are avoided."[131] According to Kasoulides, the late President Clerides assumed responsibility for the S-300 fiasco because he did not want to undermine the IDS.[132]

Nevertheless, throughout the unravelling of the crisis, one can find no traces of disagreement on the issue of Greek intentions; Greek support, in case of escalation, was presumed to be a certainty. The fact that the entire Cypriot elite did not even question the Greek stance seems puzzling, especially when

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[128] "Bitter Truths about the S-300."
[129] "Clerides was searching for Simitis without success," (in Greek), *Simerini* daily, 12/12/2014.
[130] *To Paron* daily, 29/08/2010.
[131] "Simitis did not want the S-300 on Cyprus: Glafkos Clerides on Greek-Turkish relations," *Eleftherotypia* daily, 23/08/2010.
[132] "Clerides was looking for Simitis without success."

taking into account the ambiguous signals sent by Greece in the latter half of 1998. With the unequivocal Greek military support constituting the cornerstone of Cypriot calculations, however, any incompatible signals were prone to be distorted or dismissed as unreliable.[133] After all, Greek governments had exerted strenuous efforts after 1974 to ensure that Greek-Cypriots considered Greece as a reliable ally. The alleged reaction of the Cypriot President during the last meeting with the Greek Prime Minister, citing that this would not be the first time Greece would abandon Cyprus,[134] indicates that this hard-earned trust may have been shattered in 1998. Crises may therefore not only be a contest for measuring power[135] and resolve,[136] but a process through which specific beliefs about both can be improved.

9.7: Cypriot Perceptions after the S-300 Crisis

The decision not to install the SAMs caught the entire island by surprise. According to a January 1999 opinion poll, 71% of Greek-Cypriots still wanted the missiles to be installed in Cyprus rather than Crete.[137] Many Greek-Cypriots reportedly declared to local radio stations that they would refuse either to be drafted for their military service or pay the 4% defence levy.[138] Similar responses were pervasive within the Cypriot elite. The reaction of Vassos Lyssarides, leader of the Cypriot socialist (and

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[133] Jervis, R. (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, pp. 187-190.
[134] "Bitter Truths about the S-300."
[135] Waltz, K. (1964), "The Stability of a Bipolar World," *Daedalus*, 93:3, p. 884.
[136] Art, R. and P. Cronin, (2007), "Coercive Diplomacy," in C. Crocker et. al. (eds.), *Leashing the Dogs of War: Conflict Management in a Divided World*, Washington: DC, United States Institute of Peace, p. 302.
[137] "Cyprus cancels its Russian missiles," *The Economist*, 09/01/1999.
[138] Ibid.

government partner) EDEK party, indicated a strong element of surprise; he went to publicly denounce the decision, stating his party would decide within hours whether to withdraw support from the government coalition.[139] Lyssarides stated that he was given reassurances from Athens that Greece would support Cyprus in the event of escalation.[140] On January 4 1999, Defence Minister Yannakis Omirou, who labelled the decision a "defeat without a fight,[141]" joined Education Minister Lycourgos Kappas[142], who resigned his post in protest. Omirou appraised in his letter of resignation the outcome as a "serious blow to the sovereignty of the Republic of Cyprus."[143]

While evidence points towards a perceptual adjustment, the pertinent question is whether the "updated" set of perceptions can be considered to have been a better reflection of Cyprus's strategic environment. In retrospect, this seems to be the case, as the Cypriot government returned to its former national security strategy of autonomous, though limited in operational scope, defence. In the crisis aftermath, Cypriot leaders adopted a cautious stance that has allowed for the stabilization of relations with Turkey and the Turkish-Cypriots, concentrating on a diplomatic settlement.

That was not easy and certainly not the sole strategy available, as Greece's intentions regarding the IDS remained unclear. In early 1999, for instance, the Greek and Cypriot governments clarified in numerous occasions that they regarded their decision to install the missiles in Crete to be of a tactical

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[139] "Cyprus backtracks over missiles."
[140] *To Paron*, daily, 29/08/2010.
[141] "Cyprus cancels its Russian missiles."
[142] Both members of the EDEK (Socialist) party of Cyprus.
[143] "Cyprus missile decision sparks resignations."

nature, with no repercussions for the diplomatic efforts towards a solution of the Cyprus issue or the validity of the IDS doctrine. Greek Prime Minister Costas Simitis publicly reaffirmed Greece's commitment to Cyprus, asserting that "Greece guarantees the right of Greek Cypriots to live in security and will continue to defend that right by all means available."[144]

The Cypriots, however, indicated that they "read" the signs, whether military or diplomatic; the coverage, for starters, provided by the SAMs in Crete was of limited value to both Cyprus and Greece (Figure 9-B). The transfer of the 12km-range Russian TOR-M1[145] short-range SAMs from Greece as a substitute for the S-300[146] provided Cyprus with only a marginal air-defence capability. Crucially, without the protection of at least a medium-range SAM system, the Greek Air Force would be unable to effectively aid Cyprus in the event of conflict. A study conducted prior to 1997 determined that Cyprus was in need of a surface-to-air system with a range of over 70km, with conservative estimates downsizing the range to 35 km.[147]

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[144] "Cyprus, the S-300PMU-1 Missile System, and Regional Security: An Annotated Chronology."
[145] NATO designation: SA-15 Gauntlet.
[146] "S300: How they were transferred to Crete," (in Greek), www. onalert.gr, 13/12/2013, available at http://www.onalert.gr/stories/s-300-apo-ti-metafora-thriler-sti-kriti-me-tin-epixeirisi-dias/30864, [accessed 19/12/2014].
[147] Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation radio, 10/01/1999, cited in "Cyprus, the S-300PMU-1 Missile System, and Regional Security: An Annotated Chronology."

Figure 9-B: Greek air defences in 1998,
including the S-300 SAMs in Crete
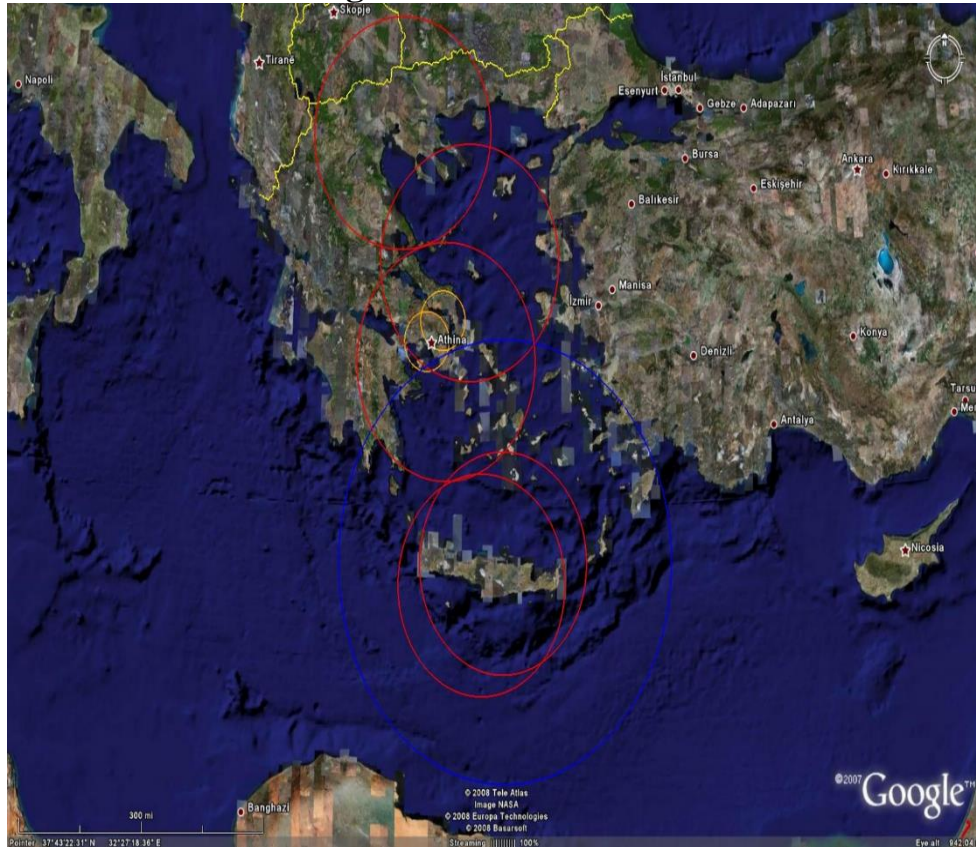
To this day, the Cypriot National Guard has not acquired such a system and appears reluctant to do so in the near future. Immediately after the S-300 crisis, the Cypriot government announced a halt of arms purchases for a "reasonable time" to give the United Nations a chance to implement its latest resolution aimed at settling the Cyprus problem.[148] According to government spokesman Christos Stylianides, the president was "not speaking of a freeze on armaments," but was "indicating his good intention

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[148] "Cypriot government announces moratorium on weapons purchases," Agence France-Presse, 14/01/1999.

to comply with the [UN] resolution."[149] Despite persisting threat perceptions, Cypriot leaders chose to de-escalate and adapted to the harsh geopolitical realities they had to face. The Cypriot National Guard would henceforth be geared towards a limited defence doctrine, aimed at retaining its capacity to prevent a further Turkish advance in Cyprus.

The evolution, however, of the Cypriot defence burden[150] is indicative of a major policy shift (Figure 9-C). While in the nine-year period between 1990 and 1998 (the year of the crisis peak), it averaged 5.64% of GDP on a yearly basis, it appears reduced by more than 50% in the following decade (1999-2008), averaging 2.42% of GDP, with the defence effort indicating a sharp decrease since 1999. The armaments hiatus, therefore, proved to be permanent, as Cyprus moved to effectively freeze its efforts to expand the National Guard's operational scope beyond its capacity to undertake defensive ground operations. Up to this day, procurements have been largely limited to repair and replacement material, with scarce significant purchases, such as the Russian Mil Mi-35P "Crocodile" attack Helicopters in 2001, most negotiated and completed in secrecy, so as to avoid a Turkish reaction.

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[149] Ibid.

[150] The ratio of defence expenditure to the national product, commonly referred to as "defence burden", is particularly useful for cross-national and longitudinal studies, because absolute measures, such as millions of USD, cannot capture the relative pressure of defence outlays on the budget and are, moreover, sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations. For an overview of relevant issues see Hartley, K. and T. Sandler (eds.) (1995), *Handbook of Defence Economics*, Amsterdam: North-Holland.

**Figure 9-C: Republic of Cyprus
Defence Burden 1970-2008**
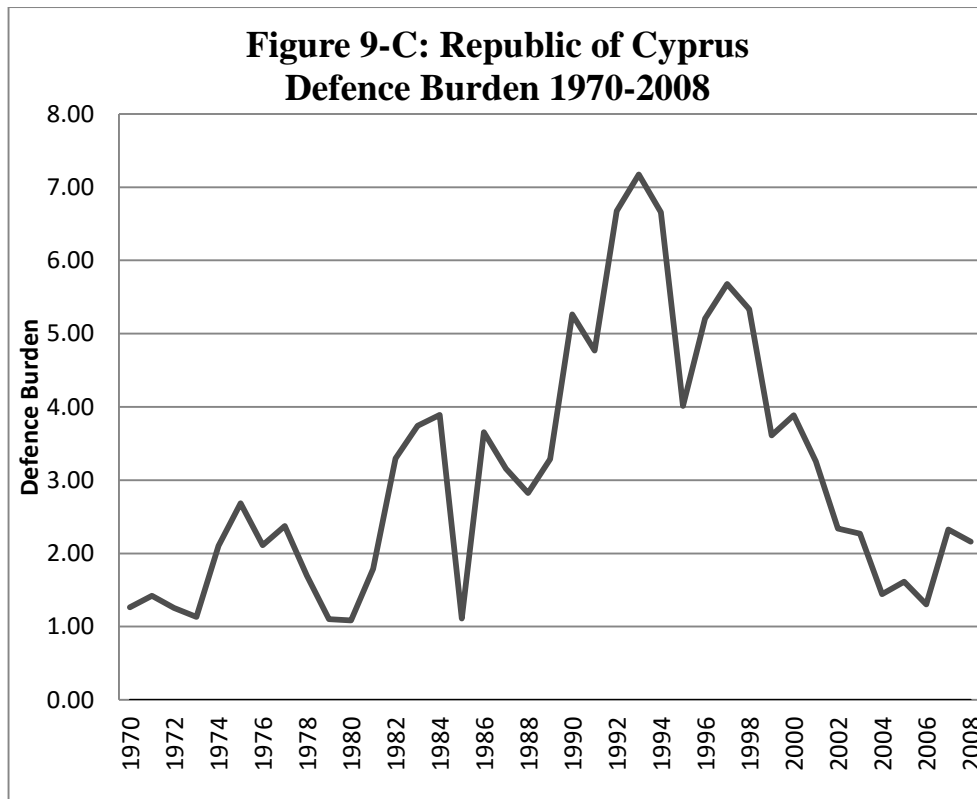
The military balance on the island has, in the meantime, swung to Turkey's favour. Analyses indicate that the Turkish forces deployed in Cyprus (XI army corps), have, over the recent years, increased their levels of military manpower, sophistication and war-fighting capability.[151] Approximately 30 additional M48A5 battle tanks are estimated to have been delivered from Turkey, while a substantial number of armoured personnel carriers/infantry fighting vehicles was added to the existing 265 known to have been operational in the start of the decade.[152]

In the years following the S-300 crisis, Greece's desire to disengage its force projection effort from the region was gradually evidenced. The "Toksotis"

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[151] "Turkey Strengthens Its Forces in Northern Cyprus. But why?," *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 33, November-December 2005.

[152] "Turkey Strengthens Military Deployments on Cyprus," *Defense and Foreign Affairs Strategic Policy*, 32, November-December 2004.

(Archer) military manoeuvres of the Greek Air Force and Navy in Cyprus have not taken place since 2000 and the corresponding Cypriot yearly exercise "Nikiforos" has been cancelled between 2002 and 2004, only to be temporary reinstated between 2005 and 2007. While Greece's 1996 comprehensive military overhaul program was almost completed, the absence of planning to follow up with acquisitions which could enhance force projection over Cyprus has practically rendered the re-enactment of the IDS an unlikely scenario. Officially, however the IDS doctrine is still included in Greek and Cypriot[153] policy documents and is publicly upheld as a fundamental component of Greek and Cypriot security strategies.[154]

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[153] Official webpage of the Cypriot National Guard, available at http://www.army.gov.cy/?page_id=233, [accessed 06/09/2014].

[154] "Meimarakis [Greek Minister for Defence]: The IDS is valid for ever," (in Greek), *Kathimerini* (Cyprus ed.), 01/10/2009, with additional information from Cyprus News Agency, available at http://www.kathimerini.com.cy/index.php?pageaction=kat&modid=1&artid=6680&show=Y, [accessed 23/11/2013].

Chapter 10:

Conclusions and Discussion

10.1: The Impact of Crises on Perceptions: Overview

The examination of the three case studies points to a number of interesting conclusions. Firstly, the cognitive narrative received partial support only in one of the case studies (Russia-Georgia). The rest of the crises assessed indicated a marked improvement of perception accuracy. This is an important finding, as the psychological narrative based on the relevant theoretical tenets suggested a strong possibility for exacerbated misperception due to crises, an effect which should be pronounced among rivalries due to their specific, psychology-driven characteristics.

Crises among non-rivals have an unclear effect on perceptions, all else being equal. This is an important suggestion, considering the strong support of the cognitive narrative in the decision-making literature, according to which crisis conditions are a major cause of misperception and escalation. The most important proposition of this thesis, however, is that crises will actually tend to improve perceptions among rival dyads. This is not necessarily a claim that in any given case, crises should be expected to improve perceptual accuracy, as the purported relationship is modified in international politics by a multitude of factors. Variables such as the cognitive traits of policymakers, threat intensity, clarity of signals, bureaucratic capacity, cultural affinity and time constraints may severely affect the perceptual impact of the incident under study.

Future theory development should expand beyond this general hypothesis and explore the specific conditions under which crises will induce more accurate perceptions or exacerbate biases. Moreover, the possibility of differentiations across regions should be entertained. More case studies are necessary to determine whether rivals in one region behave differently compared to rival dyads in another. Finally, findings suggest that the causes of war between enduring rivals may be more complicated than previously thought. If crises between rivals actually improve perceptions, the rivalry question in international politics remains wide open to novel theorizing, which will modify the problematic assumption that hostilities in rivalries can be attributed to crisis-induced biases.

With regards to specific case study findings, in the Russo-Georgian crisis of 2008, escalation did take place and was shown to have been strongly related to Georgian biases. These misperceptions, however, concerning calculations on Russian motivations, were not generated by the 2008 crisis. The Georgian government operated under an inaccurate set of perceptions, derived from a series of antecedent crises in 2003 and 2004. These lessons constituted the foundation of Georgian biases, bolstered between 2004 and 2008. While it is uncertain whether the 2008 crisis exacerbated Georgian misperception, the absence of a rational updating process in the period leading to the Russo-Georgian war meant that decisions were characterized by biases, leading to miscalculation and conflict.

Even the 2003-2004 crises, on which Georgian misperceptions were based, led to a series of learned lessons which proved accurate and relevant. Inferences on Russian motivations, however, were employed by the Georgian leadership in a counter-productive manner, establishing and supporting the belief that Russia had no intention to fight for either South Ossetia or Abkhazia. Biases persisted and

became pervasive in the following years. Until the eventual outbreak of the 2008 war, signals pointing to a different outlook were either ignored or misinterpreted. In that sense, the posited correlation between misperception and conflict in the existing literature was empirically supported by the 2008 war. The purported connection, however, between crises and misperception can be said to have only been partially substantiated.

Contrary to psychological propositions, crises were shown to be strongly connected to an increased accuracy of leadership perceptions. The Aegean Sea and the S-300 crises decisively improved policymakers' perceptions. In both cases, perceptions became more accurate, reflecting a better understanding of enemy and allied motivations and capabilities. Athens was particularly shocked to realize Ankara's evolving doctrine. In the second half of the 1990s, Turkey was reluctant to advance its claims through the open use of force in an all-out war for supremacy in the Aegean Sea. The Turkish navy had become capable of quickly responding to tactical developments and acted in accordance with Ankara's political and legal priorities. The goal was to advance Turkish claims via a piecemeal, low-intensity strategy. The Imia crisis induced a perceptual "shock" to the Greek establishment which would subsequently adjust effectively to the changing nature of the Greek-Turkish rivalry.

Two years after the Imia crisis, the Cypriot leadership was surprised to acknowledge that Greece was no longer willing to risk a war with Turkey over Cyprus. Aware of its faltering capacity to project force in the Eastern Mediterranean, a Greek retrenchment in the late 1990s would leave Cyprus exposed to a growing Turkish presence in the region. Crises can thus bear a

clarifying effect on a wider set of relations connected to a dyadic conflict, enabling leaders to reach decisions that reflect more accurately external conditions.

Greece and Cyprus have been long-term allies and possess an indisputable political and cultural affinity that should have allowed them to possess accurate perceptions of each other. Perceptions associated with the bilateral alliance, however, reflected earlier calculations, originating in the early 1990s and the strategic imperatives of the "Integrated Defence Space" doctrine. The 1998 crisis caused a perceptual shock to Cypriot leaders, forcing the acknowledgement of contemporary Greek security priorities, which were detrimental to the existence of a Greek-Cypriot alliance built around Greek extended deterrence. The contrast between Cypriot and Georgian in-crisis attitudes is striking. Further research could explore the conditions under which perceptual, "clarifying" shocks occur or do not occur during crises and the extent to which these depend on existing bias strength (past) or in-crisis factors such as crisis intensity (present).

What could these findings suggest about the literature on stress and cognition? With regards to individual decision-makers, human biology could swiftly compromise the positive effects of increased attention and alertness. The adrenal gland secretes cortisol, which at low levels acts supportively in decision-making by enhancing mental processes, but impairs cognitive functions at high levels.[1] However, psychologists are not unanimous in their condemnation of high stress levels. Mortlock recognises that occasional conditions of extreme stress may bolster learning, though individuals will generally tend to avoid such stressful

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[1] Buchanan, T. and W. Lovallo (2001), "Enhanced memory for emotional material following stress-level cortisol treatment in humans," *Psychoneuroendocrinology*, 26:3, pp. 307-317.

conditions.[2] In other words decision-makers are naturally inclined to avoid stress-inducing situations, but when they are forced to face a crisis, stressful conditions may actually promote deep learning.

Importantly, while human biology may indeed be vulnerable to high levels of arousal, security policy decisions are usually reached in environments which are specifically designed to counter the adverse effects of emotions. We can thus reasonably assume that irrationality is minimised in situations where decision-making is supported by a multitude of institutions and processes, as is the case in foreign policy making. Substantial support from members of the executive, the armed forces, intelligence services and diplomats is expected to counter, if not alleviate, the danger of decisions being reached under extreme stress or panic.

At the same time, the "benefits" of stress related to deep learning may still be present, as intelligence, military and government officials face the necessity of focusing their attention and perhaps re-formulating their perceptions due to the imminent threat, which redirects state resources towards addressing the urgent problem. Therefore, if applicable to policy-making in security crises, the Yerkes-Dodson law could be characterised by a much higher threshold of arousal levels after which decision-making is compromised. The relationship between emotional stress and policy making, overall, is an area which future research could shed more light on, as the majority of relevant research has been undertaken in either laboratory or classroom environments.[3]

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[2] Mortlock, C. (1984), *The Adventure Alternative*, Milnthorpe: Cicerone Press, p. 41.
[3] Warr, P. and J. Downing (2000), "Learning strategies, learning anxiety and knowledge acquisition", *British Journal of Psychology*, 91:3, pp. 311-333.

In any case, these findings do suggest that crises can bolster deep learning processes, as the impact of crises on leadership perceptions was not temporary or superficial, isolated to elites and decision-makers associated with the respective crisis incident. On the contrary, the effect of crises was shown to be deep and long lasting. Major perceptual adjustments took place, with new sets of calculations being "internalized" and embedded in subsequent policies enacted, irrespective of domestic political developments. In this regard, the assumption that perceptions can be considered as a unit level variable finds support, even though individual cognitive characteristics still affect the evolution and outcomes of interstate crises.

This indicates that despite the persistent assumption that wars are far more "revealing" events regarding the exposure of both intentions and capabilities of parties involved, crises appear to possess the capacity to instil a similarly robust and long-lasting change of state-level perceptions. The adjustment effect across all case-studies was characterized by a high degree of intensity, certainty and prolonged duration. This allows the new set of perceptions to be swiftly integrated in state institutions, leading to a corresponding realignment of security strategies.

Georgia's post-war security policy is indicative of the aforementioned characteristic of major wars. An overview of the relevant evidence indicates that Tbilisi became keenly aware of Russian priorities in the region. This is only natural, considering that wars have been known for their clarifying effect in international politics, as state motivations and capabilities are tested and revealed in the battlefield, leaving little room for misinterpretations. Since the 2008 conflagration, Georgian security policy has been characterised by moderation, lower expenditure levels and an emphasis on defensive capabilities, as opposed to offensive capacity. Its doctrine is adjusted to reflect a priority for stability and

deterrence, avoiding actions that could trigger an escalation, such as the forward deployment of forces, or NATO membership steps.[4]

The conclusion of the two other crises ushered new foreign and security policies which were appropriate to the strategic circumstances of the dyads, as they reflected more accurately both the intentions and capabilities of parties involved. In Greece's case, while the capabilities gap between the two countries has widened in the ensuing years, the country has managed to both avoid a similar escalation and effectively defend its interests in the Aegean Sea, solidifying its claims based on international maritime law. Cypriot leaders were extremely pragmatic to recognize the new realities, foregoing the deployment of the missiles as soon as Greek intentions overcame the perceptual inertia of the island's leadership. The Republic of Cyprus, in the years following the crisis, pursued a security policy characterised by a purely defensive doctrine, despite the risks associated with this dramatic shift. Considering the past of the island, including tensions and the potential for enhanced threat perceptions during the S-300 crisis, the Cypriot adjustment can be considered as a testament to the ability of a country to rationally adapt to its environment.

10.2: Lessons from the Aegean Sea Crisis

The 1996 crisis between Greece and Turkey presents the strongest evidence thus far that crises can actually bolster rational thinking. Not only did Greek leaders succeed in maintaining a well-calibrated set of perceptions throughout the crisis,

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[4] Khidasheli, T. (2011), "Georgia's European Way," *International Politics and Society*, 3/2011, p. 96, available at http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/ipg/2011-3/09_khidasheli.pdf, [accessed 20/01/2015].

but they were also quick to adjust Greek security policy accordingly following the end of the standoff. During the crisis, Greek political and military decision-makers possessed a remarkably accurate and nuanced picture of Turkish priorities. Maritime jurisdiction issues, disagreements and Turkish goals were closely monitored and well understood in Athens, with intelligence officials and political figures even converging on the approximate timing of Turkish activities aimed at undermining Greek claims. Perceptual accuracy in this regard was boosted during the crisis, as a consensus was formed across Greek policy-makers that issues related to maritime jurisdiction would henceforth constitute the main issue area around which the rivalry would revolve.

Following the end of the Cold War, a new cause of friction between the two countries would transform the historical rivalry, adding a more unstable, yet less militarized dimension to the old competition for influence in the Southern Mediterranean. Simmering tensions regarding jurisdiction and sovereignty in maritime areas would manifest as a fully-fledged crisis. The Greek reliance on the international law of the sea and the UNCLOS treaty in particular, which has not been endorsed by Turkey, would exacerbate tensions. Ankara viewed the adoption of an international treaty by Athens as a political tool in a historically consistent Greek strategy aiming at forming a militarized "cordon sanitaire" around Turkey, isolate it from its "natural" rights in the Eastern Mediterranean and turn the Aegean Sea into a Greek "lake.[5]"

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[5] "Background Note on Aegean Disputes," Republic of Turkey, Ministry of Foreign Affairs website, available at http://www.mfa.gov.tr/background-note-on-aegean-disputes.en.mfa, [accessed 14/01/2015].

The Greek intelligence establishment had taken notice of the Turkish attitude towards the Greek claims in the Aegean and its warnings appeared to have been appreciated by the country's political elite. Even though the widening capability gap between the two countries could have amplified Greek threat perceptions, there was an initial understanding in Athens that Turkey's goals would not be served by seizing Greek territory. Assessments by intelligence officials even mentioned the term "grey zones", the Turkish approach to bilateral affairs that would soon manifest and become the focal point in Greco-Turkish relations for years to come. However, before the onset of the crisis there was no consensus that "old" threats would subside. Greek fears of territory loss, subversive activities related to the northern region of Thrace and potential challenges to Cypriot security were all "competing" for primacy in Greek strategic thinking. The Imia crisis would thus offer degree of clarity.

Lessons learned during the crises were subsequently put to test. Turkey soon initiated a series of small-scale challenges to Greek sovereignty and jurisdictional claims. These ranged from disagreements within NATO mechanisms regarding the position of Greek maritime boundaries in the Aegean Sea, to challenging the status of islets not explicitly mentioned in international treaties that had hitherto been unchallenged. Estimates driven from crisis developments were thus highly accurate, pointing towards a long-lasting tension which would characterize bilateral relations.

Overall, Turkey's goals were closely followed and well understood, despite uncertainties expected to arise during a militarized incident. But whereas Turkish goals were well perceived, the Turkish strategy to be followed was not properly assessed. Doctrinal shifts are not easily understood, particularly in instances when

these are not made public. The Turkish reliance on low-intensity warfare was a novelty in the rivalry history between the two countries. The Turkish army had already undergone a substantial modernization in the preceding years. As a result, it possessed the capacity to challenge Greece with sporadic actions aiming at a piecemeal erosion of Greek deterrence and the projection of Turkish claims. Even though intelligence estimates alluded to challenges pertaining to Greek maritime jurisdiction, the Greek political and military establishment did not anticipate the operational aspects through which the Turkish strategy would be manifested.

The main problem was the lack of a compatible operational culture in the Greek armed forces. Moreover, the materially and technologically inferior Greek military did not possess the assets that would enable it to muster a quick response at a commensurate level of escalation. For instance, the Greek coastguard lacked modern patrol vessels that could sustain escalation at a level where major naval assets are not involved in a maritime incident. Fast transport assets were also scarce and obsolete. The crisis can be thus said to have opened the eyes of Greek strategists. The adoption of the flexible response doctrine and the procurement of corresponding equipment enabled the Greek military to both adjust effectively to Turkey's new approach and avoid another major crisis. Hundreds of militarized incidents have taken place in the Aegean Sea since 1996, despite the obvious improvement in bilateral relations. Even though some of those incidents raised tensions in the area, no major crises have been observed. In this regard, the Aegean Sea crisis may have contributed to stability by "forcing" one of the sides to realign its perceptions and adjust its strategy.

10.3: Lessons from the Russo-Georgian Crisis

Whereas the Aegean Sea crisis was pivotal in rationally updating Greek perceptions, the 2008 crisis in South-Ossetian crisis did not appear to affect prior Georgian calculations in any meaningful way. Existing biases persisted, if they were not exacerbated during the short-lived crisis and as a result, war erupted. As was the case with Greek misperceptions, Georgian beliefs originated before the events of 2008 and were shown to have been generated by a series of crises in Georgia between 2003 and 2004. During the short-lived 2008 crisis in South-Ossetia, Georgian calculations appeared to be unaltered until the crisis escalated to open war with Russia in August.

Russian signals pointing to a highly different outlook went unnoticed, despite their strength and the credibility of Russian threats, backed by Moscow's track record and its capacity to successfully undertake large-scale military operations in its proximity. In a typical case of premature cognitive closure, where decision-makers cease to accept and rationally process incoming information after a decision has been reached,[6] Georgian policy-makers ignored signals coming from allies as well. Washington's warnings indicating that escalation would be detrimental to the advancement of Georgian interests were disregarded or wrongly interpreted as commitments, despite the apparent problems associated with such an assessment.

Both Georgian and Cypriot policy-makers, in the respective case studies, appeared to misinterpret allied intentions. Similarities end there, however. The

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[6] Jervis, R. (1976), *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, pp. 187-191.

Cypriot leadership failed to grasp the intentions of a close ally whose signals were ambivalent until the eleventh hour. The Georgians, on the other hand, disregarded warnings from all sides, essentially failing to predict who their battlefield foe would be, as a Russian attack essentially did not appear to fall within the realm of possibility for Tbilisi. The Saakashvilli administration's overconfidence that only a limited war would be waged in South Ossetia is, therefore, a striking element that deserves closer scrutiny.

An examination of the case study found no evidence of military planning towards an effective engagement of Russian forces, with the exception of neutralizing the lightly armed peacekeeping force in South Ossetia. The Georgians did build an anti-aircraft umbrella, however, as Russian air-incursions over Georgian soil had been a recurring phenomenon in preceding years. Quite tellingly, the Georgian military had not even planned to stop Russian supplies through the Roki tunnel, the only avenue through which Ossetian militias could be reinforced in case of conflict. Georgia's very selective thinking about Russian power stemmed from a deep-rooted belief that an encounter with Russia would either not take place, or would be of limited nature.

The thesis evaluated the possibility that Georgians chose to fight a preventive war when the crisis escalated. When the outbreak of war is perceived to be inevitable, individuals tend to generate biases that exacerbate overconfidence. A Georgian commitment to defend the country, assuming a Russian attack was expected, could easily lead to pronounced biases. This sequence of events would lend credence to the scenario that the crisis itself exacerbated biases by "forcing" Georgians to become overconfident. In psychology, dissonance is a form of stress that affects the decision-making processes of individuals when faced with a

pressing issue. Janis and Mann identified defensive avoidance as a coping mechanism aiming at boosting the self-confidence of the decision-maker and tackling potential challenges when the decision is announced. A type of defensive avoidance involves bolstering the merits and downplaying the disadvantages of the decision to which one is committed. This process can lead to a rejection or misperception of evidence pointing to the negative consequences or the fallacy of the assumptions under which the decision was taken.[7]

Nevertheless, the careful assessment of the case study indicated that cognitive closure may have occurred earlier. In fact, one could suggest that Georgian policymakers operated under heavy biases ever since Georgian policy planners "interpreted" the 2003-2004 crises. This is plausible, as the relevant literature posits that cognitive closure can be observed from the moment an actor receives adequate support for his views and a tentative conclusion is reached.[8] Jervis concedes to this notion, suggesting that intolerance to contradicting evidence may arise long before the decision is materialized or becomes firm. From the examination of the preceding crises Georgia faced in 2003 and 2004, it becomes apparent that the Saakashvilli administration made few adjustments, if any, to conclusions reached at the time. In this regard, the origin of misperceptions can be traced back to 2003 and 2004, not the crisis of 2008. Thus, the 2008 crisis failed to bolster objectivity in Georgian thinking.

The Georgian policy failures observed cannot be merely attributed to the use of analogies. The 2004 Ossetian crisis never reached the stage of a full-scale war, allowing Russia to retain a degree of ambiguity regarding its response in the event

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[7] Janis, I. and L. Mann (1977), *Decision Making*, New York: Free Press, p. 205
[8] Jervis, R. (1982), "Deterrence and Perception," *International Security*, 7:3, p. 21.

of actual large-scale hostilities. From the moment Georgian forces crossed the South-Ossetian borders and attacked the capital of the break-away province, past analogies would be of limited value. This was terra incognita, as the sole successful re-integration of a breakaway province after Georgia's independence, the 2003 operation in Ajara, was a success because of Moscow's cooperation, not in spite of its opposition. Actually, to the extent analogies could be drawn from preceding crises, the Georgian military adjusted effectively its tactics and equipment to the weaknesses and blunders presented in the 2004 Georgian military operation in South Ossetia. The avoidance, however, of contemplating different scenarios following the capture of Tskhinvali, by either the Georgian military or its political leadership, is indicative of severe cognitive deficiencies that go beyond the probabilistic nature of historical analogies.

There is also little doubt that both Clerides and Saakashvili were risk-prone leaders. Theoretically, risk-prone behaviours are not necessarily ridden with misperceptions. It is thus important to distinguish misperception from risk propensity. Perceptions of intentions and capabilities may be accurate, but an elevated risk propensity could have a major impact on the kind of policies favoured by decision-makers. Fearon indicated that during a crisis, a smaller power may challenge a powerful state if there was a reason to suspect, ex ante, that its challenge would be successful. More specifically, he suggested that "the key to understanding variation across cases in immediate deterrence outcomes is each side's prior expectations about the importance to the other side of the issues at stake."[9] The Georgian experience in 2003-2004 led its leadership to believe that

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[9] Fearon, J. (1994), "Signaling versus the balance of power and interests," Journal of Conflict Resolution 38:2, pp. 236- 269.

Russia would avoid open warfare as a measure to defend its protectorates, an assumption that may, or may not have been accurate at the time.

Prospect theory could potentially explain Georgian adventurism, to the extent that the Saakashvili administration perceived itself to be operating under the domain of loss. According to prospect theory tenets, leaders tend to be risk averse when they perceive that they are in the domain of gain and risk–prone when they believe that they have lost something of value or see an increased likelihood of major loss.[10] This is because of the "endowment effect," a condition in which people tend to value more what they already have than what they do not yet possess.

Anwar Sadat, for instance, operated from a position of perceived loss, when he decided to launch an attack against the Israelis, even though Israel retained its air superiority deterrent intact. Recapturing the Sinai, lost in 1967, had become a reference point for the Egyptian leadership that rendered rational deterrence inoperable. Sadat's behaviour, for this reason, can be labelled extremely risky, but acceptable from a utilitarian sense. In Georgia's case, imminence of hostilities from Russia or Moscow's consolidation of authority in the breakaway provinces could place Saakashvili's actions in an analogous context, especially when taking into consideration the strategic and psychological value of these provinces.

This explanation is equally problematic. In the months leading up to the Ossetian conflict, few indications point to any Russian initiative that could inflict a considerable loss to Georgia. On the contrary, one could entertain the possibility that prospect theory was applicable to Russia. For the first time since the re-

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[10] Kahneman, D. and A. Tversky (1979), "Prospect theory: An analysis of decision under risk," *Econometrica*, 47:2, pp. 263-292.

emergence of Moscow in the late 1990s, Russian influence was being eroded in what was regarded as Russia's sphere of influence. The constant expansion of the Euro-Atlantic institutions and the climax of discussions on a U.S.-led ballistic missile defence system had a profound effect on Russian foreign policy. If prospect theory is of any relevance, the "loss" of Ukraine, for Russians, may have functioned as a trigger for a more assertive stance in Moscow and Georgia's leadership should have paid close attention to such important developments.

Finally, the lack of dissenting voices within Georgian political and military elites is striking, considering the relative openness of the Georgian polity and the influence of Western governments and EU institutions in the country. The International Crisis Group is a highly visible organization whose reports gain considerable publicity and yet, there is little evidence of any debate among Georgian policy makers of incoming warnings, despite signals coming from all aforementioned directions. U.S. diplomatic efforts to avert the crisis were also unsuccessful, failing to generate any concern among Georgian policy planners (there could have existed internal disagreements which were never made public).

As indicated in the detailed assessment of the case-study, the 2008 government, formed around hard-line participants in the 2003-2004 crises, may have contributed to the establishment of a consistent set of misperceptions within the Georgian administration. Dissenters may have simply chosen to stay silent or were "converted" somewhere in the process.[11] After all, "people's needs to work with others, further their political goals, and live with themselves tap into their emotions and drive them to certain beliefs."[12] Overall, the "impenetrability" of

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[11] Janis, I. (1972), *Victims of Groupthink: A Psychological Study of Foreign Policy Decisions and Fiascoes,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

[12] Jervis, R. (2006), "Understanding Beliefs," *Political Psychology*, 27:5, p. 652.

Georgian calculations deserves closer scrutiny and generally, future research can shed light on the determinants of similarly persistent biases during crises.

10.4: Lessons from the S-300 Missile Crisis

The Cypriot crisis was a highly appropriate case study for the evaluation of in-crisis perceptions and particularly the intensity and direction of their adjustment. This is because the time available to the Clerides administration, a distinctive feature of this crisis which lasted for almost two years, allowed for a highly detailed mapping of perceptual shifts. Developments were relatively slow for a crisis and leaders were in a position to evaluate information on a clearly identifiable manner, responding to each new stimulus as they saw fit. State resources, however limited, could also be fully used. While a sense of urgency was present (thus putting the case study firmly in the international crises population), the Cypriot government possessed the luxury to deploy its political and diplomatic assets at the international level in its effort to ascertain enemy and allied intentions.

The less pressing time constraints of the particular crisis have interesting implications. In behavioural economics, instances in which high-stakes choices are involved but the burden of severe time pressures is lifted, individuals are in a position to correct their decision-making biases, allowing for rational outcomes.[13] In this regard, one could anticipate that Greek intentions would be thoroughly scrutinized by the Cypriot leadership. The additional time available to Clerides

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[13] Kahneman, D. (2003), "Maps of Bounded Rationality: Psychology for Behavioral Economics," *American Economic Review*, 93:5, p. 1468.

and the Cypriot elites (most of its members visited Athens on a regular basis to consult with their Greek counterparts) could be put to use so as to thoroughly evaluate Greek motivations. After all, the IDS doctrine depended firmly on Greek commitments.

The main problem the Clerides had to face, in retrospect, was the ambiguous nature of Greek signals prior to the December 1998 escalation. In 1998, the Greek government probably viewed its extended deterrence over Cyprus as an unnecessary and perhaps unsustainable commitment but the case study revealed the Greek rationale for verbally affirming its extended deterrence posture during a time of a widening capabilities gap with Turkey. In essence, Greece feared that a further erosion of its deterrence in Cyprus would translate to increased tensions in the Aegean. The Imia crisis in 1996 had eroded the perception that Greece was willing to escalate in order to protect its interests in the Aegean and a further capitulation in Cyprus could be detrimental to the effort undertaken by Athens to reinstate its deterrence credibility. Mock dogfights, maritime incidents and diplomatic exchanges between Athens and Ankara persisted, despite the political rapprochement underway and the conscious choice to integrate bilateral relations in a European context.

The credibility of commitments has been shown to affect leadership calculation in cases of extended deterrence. This is not due to an often purported robust relationship between past behaviour and future crises. Press examined a series of crises and found that while perceptions of power and interests influenced decision makers' assessments, past behaviour did not seem to inform credibility

assessments.[14] Huth and Russett, moreover, studied fifty four cases of extended deterrence and also concluded that past behaviour did not seem to affect future deterrence crises.[15] However, a number of influential scholars maintain that past behaviour affects future credibility assessments.[16] More importantly, leaders themselves have indicated that credibility is a vital consideration in their calculations. As Schelling argued, in reference to the Korean War "We lost thirty thousand dead in Korea to save face for the United States and the United Nations, not to save South Korea for the South Koreans, and it was undoubtedly worth it. Soviet expectations about the behavior of the United States are one of the most valuable assets we possess in world affairs."[17] Similarly, a British official asserted that ''If we can't get the Argentineans out of the Falklands, how long do you think it will be before the Spaniards take a crack at Gibraltar?''[18]

Similar dilemmas indicate that commitments related to the provision of extended deterrence may bear a particular political weight in the domestic arena. The Greek-Cypriot relationship could only amplify such perceptions. There is no doubt that the political costs in Athens associated with an "abandonment" of Cyprus would be significant. The Greek public opinion has historically been sensitive to calls for extending the protection umbrella of the Greek armed forces over Cyprus and any effort to undermine what is viewed as a historical obligation of Greek governments would have severe repercussions. Finally, the Simitis administration had, since its inauguration and the Imia crisis, been trying to

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[14] Press, D. (2005), *Calculating Credibility: How Leaders Assess Military Threats,* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
[15] Huth, P. and B. Russett (1984), "What makes deterrence work? Cases from 1900 to 1980," *World Politics*, 36:4, pp. 496-526.
[16] For an overview see Dafoe, A. et. al. (2014), "Reputation and Status as Motives for War," *Annual Review of Political Science*, 17:2, pp. 371-393.
[17] Schelling, T. (1966), *Arms and Influence*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, pp. 124-125.
[18] Mercer, J. (1996), *Reputation and International Politics*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, p. 21.

"tame" the "patriotic" wing of the ruling PASOK party, which often attacked the Prime Minister and the rest of the moderate party members. The Greek administration thus had a robust motivation to keep its preference change hidden from the Clerides government. This would complicate, but should not necessarily obscure Cypriot assessments of Greek intentions.

Cypriot leaders, after all, possess a profound knowledge of Greek politics, bolstered by a network of contacts in the Greek political, academic and business spheres. There is no trace of any attempt to evaluate the impact of the Imia crisis, for example, or the Greek military procurement program of 1996-97, both of which alluded to a drastic reduction of force projection activities by the Greek armed forces in the coming years. The diplomatic détente between Greece and Turkey was equally ignored. The rapprochement between Athens and Ankara, culminating in the abolition of the Greek veto to Turkey's EU membership was arguably the most important diplomatic breakthrough between the two countries after 1974. All evidence however, points to an inexplicable absence of these issues from Cypriot calculations. The persistence of biases in long-running crises is not an exclusively Cypriot "privilege," however. David Lake described succinctly how surprisingly little debate there was in Washington about alternative strategies and cost assessments of a potential conflict in the run up to the 2003 Iraqi war.[19]

Similarly to the Russo-Georgian crisis, misperceptions can be traced back to a time preceding the onset of the crisis. Cypriot perceptions regarding Greek commitments were largely shaped by actions undertaken by former Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou and his Defence Minister Gerasimos Arsenis in the

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[19] Lake, D. (2011), "Two Cheers for Bargaining Theory: Assessing Rationalist Explanations of the Iraq War," *International Security*, 35:3, p. 47.

early 1990s. Their commitment to Cypriot security, well-known to the publics of both countries since the 1980s, reached a climax when Greece and Cyprus co-established the IDS doctrine. The impact of the IDS doctrine on Cypriot thinking was so substantial, that escalation during the S-300 crisis would reach a critical level before any meaningful reassessment was undertaken. Nevertheless, the crisis itself was shown to be unrelated to biases, with escalation associated with a review of existing calculations.

Cypriot perceptions of Turkish intentions during the crisis appeared to be accurate, stable and consistent with an elevated probability for a limited conflict. While the Cypriot persistence to proceed with the S-300 purchase, in light of the fierce Turkish response, could question the rationality of Clerides's decision-making, risk-taking was an approach espoused by the overwhelming majority of the Cypriot elite and the electorate. Quite simply, Greek-Cypriots were very dissatisfied with the status quo. In the early and mid-1990s, Cypriots witnessed the end of the Cold War, the reunification of Germany and the gradual integration of Central and Eastern European states with the EU. In what seemed to be a historical aberration, a political stalemate was consolidating the division of Cyprus, while the Turkish military gained in strength at a regional level. Turkish Cypriot positions, moreover, were deemed unacceptable by the Greek Cypriot majority, which believed that the main goal of Ankara was to maintain a status of permanent division between the two communities.

Cypriot preferences engendered a strong desire to somehow alter the bargaining terms with Turkish Cypriots. In this regard, militarized escalation is not an unknown tactic in the relevant literature, should one of the sides seek to attain a more favourable settlement. Schweller has shown that even lesser revisionist

powers in World War II (such as Japan and Italy) could behave like "jackals" in their effort to secure a better distribution of international "spoils."[20] Smaller powers such as Cyprus may rarely be capable of a military fait accompli, but given the opportunity, they can press for a status quo change. For this reason, besides the obvious tool of alliance formation, revisionist states tend to use, as was the case in Cyprus, highly visible arms build ups as a tool to demonstrate their resolve to change the status quo.[21]

The impact of the perceptual shift was, as in the Aegean Sea crisis case, deep and lasting. Whereas the alliance between Greece and Cyprus was highly publicized and was aimed at bolstering Greek and Cypriot deterrence through costly signals of resolve, the Cypriot security strategy after 1998 is characterised by both moderation and a high level of secrecy. The Cypriot security doctrine changed from a deterrent posture to one emphasizing limited defence. The Cypriot National Guard would procure systems associated with quick counter-strikes and ground manoeuvres aimed at reversing the results of a potential attack coming from the "Green line."

A high degree of secrecy was also pursued, so as to avoid escalation from Ankara. In the literature mobilizing privately is associated with preparing to fight, rather than political bargaining, as the pre-World War II example of Japanese mobilization indicates.[22] It thus appears that deterrence was deemed unachievable by the Cypriot leaderships, as the absence of Greek reinforcements (due to the

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[20] Schweller, R. (1998), "Deadly Imbalances: Tripolarity and Hitler's Strategy of World Conquest," *World Politics*, 51:1, p. 24.
[21] Fearon, J. (1997), "Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs," Journal of Conflict Resolution 41:1, pp. 68-90.
[22] Hybel, A. (1986), *The logic of Surprise in International Conflict*, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books.

demise of the IDS) could not be substituted by purely domestic capabilities. Russian Mi-18 attack helicopters and mid-range surface to air BUK-M1 missiles were procured but were only revealed to the public years later by the Cypriot National Guard. Highly visible manoeuvres were cancelled in favour of small scale exercises, most of which were coordinated, but not jointly executed with the Greek forces in the region.

The S-300 crises had a visible and lasting political impact too. The level of Cypriot armament procurements remains at an all-time low since the late 1990s, following closely the NATO average, instead of mimicking the conflict-ridden countries of the Eastern Mediterranean, of which Cyprus has been a historical example. Diplomacy would henceforth constitute the backbone of Cypriot efforts towards a settlement with Turkey. The accelerated negotiations may have failed to deliver a mutually acceptable solution of the Cyprus problem, but its "Europeanization" through the integration of the issue in the wider EU-Turkish relations and the emphasis on multilateral diplomacy appeared to promote stability in the island. While a solution to the Cyprus problem remains elusive, no major crises have occurred since 1998.

10.5: What did we learn about Enduring Rivals?

10.5.1: Overview of Conclusions

Crises, in rivalries, appear to boost the capacity of state leaderships to learn about the motivations and capabilities of the other rival, as well as of third parties that may be involved in the antagonism. In non-rival relationships, crises increase the

accuracy of capability assessments, revealing hitherto unobserved trends, but ultimately fail to alter perceptions related to intentions and motivations. This crucial finding should place a qualifier in the purported connection of critical events to learning processes. In international politics, this type of learning is called "diagnostic" and concerns "changes in beliefs about the definition of the situation or the preferences, intentions, or relative capabilities of others."[23] It is distinguished from "causal learning" which refers to beliefs about cause and effect hypotheses. Both rival and non-rival dyads undertake diagnostic learning when in crises, but non-rival dyads tend to ignore or fit into pre-existing beliefs any incoming evidence that does not fit into pre-existing expectations regarding enemy intentions. Perceptual adjustment, therefore, is fundamentally different between rival and non-rival dyads, allowing for exacerbated biases across non-rival actors, which may lead to erroneous policy choices. This point will be further clarified in the following sections.

With regards to capabilities, crises appear conducive to rational learning processes across both rival and non-rival dyads. Of course, the nature of policy adjustment in this domain rarely allows for in-crisis initiatives that may affect crisis outcomes. After a crisis is concluded, however, all dyads appear to possess an improved understanding of the balance of power and the implications of underlying doctrinal developments. After the 2003-2004 crises, the Georgian military adapted in an exceptional manner to operational challenges associated with the secessionist provinces, despite the myopic approach regarding a future Russian involvement. The Greek armed forces balanced effectively between a

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[23] Levy, J. (1994), "Learning and foreign policy: sweeping a conceptual minefield," *International Organization*, 48:2, p. 285.

resolute response to Turkish actions in the Aegean and the avoidance of escalation, following the Imia crisis.

With regards to the capability component of perceptions, crises should differ across rivals and non-rivals solely on the relative intensity of perceptual adjustment. By default, the frequent militarized attrition characterizing rivals enables them to closely follow developments related to the war-fighting capacity of their enemies and associated operational aspects, adjusting their strategies accordingly in a gradual manner. Perceptual lags should therefore be comparatively more extensive in non-rival dyads, thanks to the infrequent nature of militarized interactions between contestants. This implies that capability misperception could be more pronounced among non-rivals. For this reason, misperception of capabilities can be more influential in decision-making, exacerbating the potential for escalation and conflict.

A more fundamental differentiation of rivals relative to non-rivals is connected to perceptions of intentions. During crises, a stronger rivalry identification is consistent with a higher probability of an accurate and timely updating of perceptions. A rivalry relationship can therefore increase the chances of sound policy choices during crises, leading to de-escalation. The Greco-Turkish antagonism, an archetypical rivalry labelled as such by all scholars studying the phenomenon, was characteristic of the nuanced and level-headed understanding of Turkish motivations, despite the presence of an inexperienced administration and exacerbated threat perceptions prevalent across the population. The Cypriot S-300 adventure showed that even when fundamental grand strategic choices are questioned during a crisis, perceptions can change to accommodate new evidence, before escalation becomes irreversible.

In this regard, interaction between rivals appears to be more "strategic" than interaction in non-rival dyads. In the foreign policy literature, strategic interaction arises from "the ability of one state to discern the decision-making processes and intentions of another state and to formulate its own foreign policy behavior in response."[24] A distinct characteristic of rival dyads that sets them apart from other conflictual dyads appears to be the capacity of leaders to profoundly empathize, during crises, with both enemies and allies, understanding nuanced motivations and calculations which affect their behaviour. This allows them to counter any biases present or exacerbated by crisis conditions, rendering sound policy-making possible.

10.5.2: Empathy as a Distinguishing Feature of Enduring Rivals

Empathy refers to the understanding of the "other's" worldview and interest definition, including threats to those interests.[25] Rivalry conditions, as suggested, favour an increased degree of empathy, which may be bolstered during crises. That is a logical assumption, considering that rivals devote substantial resources in acquiring and processing intelligence and other relevant information related to their nemeses (including detailed analyses of domestic political conditions and actors).

Even in peaceful "intermissions," rivals update their perceptions through evaluating incoming intelligence, while leaders keep themselves abreast of developments related to their countries' nemeses. Higher education institutions,

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[24] Clark, D. (2003), "Can Strategic Interaction Divert Diversionary Behavior? A Model of U.S. Conflict Propensity," *The Journal of Politics*, 65:4, pp. 1013-1039, p. 1020.
[25] Stein, J. (1993), "Building politics into psychology: The misperception of threat," in J. Kressel (ed.), *Political Psychology*, New York: Paragon, pp. 371-373.

think tanks and the media use their acquired knowledge and channels of communication to maintain and expand their competitive edge on "reading" historical rivals. During crises, leaders' attention is focused on their rivals and all available knowledge and resources are mobilized and directed towards the upper echelons of state institutions. Leaders are therefore in a position to better ascertain enemy motivations, anticipate subsequent moves and possible reactions to own initiatives.

Of course, dedicating resources towards understanding the enemy is not a privilege exclusive to rivals. Hypothetically, a middle or great power could afford to commit extensive assets in the analysis of multiple past enemies and potential future challengers. However, empathy is more likely to exist in a context where a deep-rooted, interaction-driven familiarity exists between actors involved. This is probably related to the richness of past encounters. Irrespective of resources dedicated to "assessing" the other in conflictual relationships, rivals experience a highly diverse pattern of interactions, with "ups and downs" in their relationship, where periods of relative détente and cooperation are followed by escalation and exacerbated enmity.

Accounting for these would require domestic institutions and policymakers to establish a nuanced depiction of the rival and thus, a persistence of inflexible, stereotypical images and bias-induced beliefs is less likely to occur. Consequently, nuanced information from past encounters exists in both bureaucratic and cognitive "databases" of parties involved. Despite uncertainty, stress and time constraints in crises, this data can be "called up" and integrated in leadership assessments as soon as a signal (action or statement) by the rival

triggers its re-emergence due to its salience. As a result, reinstating perceptual accuracy is a strong possibility in crises.

Greek assessments of Turkish calculations were elaborate and to a substantial degree accurate, both before and during the Imia crisis. During the Aegean crisis, the nature of Turkish motivations was perceptually crystallized in the minds of policy-makers, who realized that the pre-crisis scenario regarding the nature of the Greek-Turkish conflict had been confirmed. The emphasis on symbols of sovereignty as opposed to military prowess indicated that Athens had received the message. The slow pace of capability adjustment may have prohibited Athens from successfully managing the crisis, but the realization of the shifting bilateral balance was adequate to deter Greek policy-makers from escalating to war.

Rationality was also bolstered during the S-300 crisis. While Cypriot leaders were oblivious to changes in Greek calculations, the gradual escalation of the crisis led to a more focused appraisal of the situation. The Cypriot-Turkish relationship is not unanimously accepted as a rivalry case, but Cypriot calculations of Turkish reactions appeared to be consistent with the observed motivations and constraints of Ankara. The S-300 gamble was a risky undertaking, but it appeared to be commensurate with Cypriot goals and the wider balance of capabilities between Turkey and the Greek-Cypriot alliance. Misperceptions in the Cypriot case primarily revolved around Greek intentions and the crisis led to a deeper understanding of the changes Greek foreign policy was undergoing.

It is of interest to note that this re-appraisal was undertaken first by Cypriot diplomats and later by the Cypriot political leadership, despite the abundance of warnings directed to Clerides and his Foreign Minister. This may have happened

because the IDS doctrine was not simply a tactical decision of limited value and duration, but a fundamental pillar of the Cypriot grand strategy. Psychology suggests that tactical beliefs are much more receptive to new (and contradicting) information compared to fundamental assumptions at the highest level. Beliefs are thus considered to be organized hierarchically and comprised of three different levels, (fundamental beliefs, strategic policy beliefs and tactical beliefs) with corresponding levels of "inertia" attached.[26] When incoming information contradicts beliefs, theory posits that tactical beliefs are adjusted first, with strategic beliefs realigned if discrepancies persist. The re-evaluation of fundamental assumptions comes last and is so difficult to undertake that is usually associated with the coming to power of individuals who are not associated with (and thus psychologically committed to) old expectations.[27]

A comparison, however, between the Cypriot and the Georgian cases points to the sharp differentiation of rival from non-rival dyads with regards to perceptual shifts. Georgian leaders were also oblivious to American warnings about escalation, despite the stern nature and intensity of these signals. In Cyprus's case, the Clerides administration reconstructed its entire set of expectations in a matter of weeks (if not days). This adjustment took place with signals from Athens that were, at the very least, ambiguous, if not contradictory. Cypriots, however, were eventually capable of cutting through the "noise," bringing about a much-needed change of course. Whereas the Georgian government appeared reluctant to debate a tactical expectation (the potential of a Russian counter-strike), the Cypriot government not only adapted to the new fundamental assumptions, but also

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[26] Tetlock, P. (1991), "Learning in U.S. and Soviet foreign policy: In search of an elusive concept," in G. Breslauer and P. Tetlock (eds.), *Learning in U.S. and Soviet foreign policy*, Boulder, CO: Westview, pp. 28-31.
[27] Ibid.

"internalized" them, by integrating them fully and swiftly in its doctrinal development. Tacitly espoused by subsequent administrations, these lessons had been "learned" by all current and future leaders, irrespective of the degree of their participation in the incidents or political affiliation.

10.5.3: Rational versus Psychological Learning

The preceding discussion would lead us to surmise that learning processes about intentions are at the core of the distinction between rival and non-rival dyads. The literature has extensively debated the nature of learning in international politics and more specifically in international conflict, with rational and psychological approaches competing against each other, supporting their relevance across case studies. However, little attention was given to the possibility that the salience of each approach may be contingent on 1) whether lessons are related to intentions or capabilities and, more importantly, on 2) whether the parties involved belong to a rivalry dyad or not. A general overview of conclusions is thereby offered:

1) Crises promote learning, with perceptions of power balances and capabilities becoming more accurate across both rival and non-rival dyads. The effect, however, should be more pronounced for rivals, as their frequent "saber rattling" enables them to adjust their strategies in a more precise and timely manner compared to non-rivals.

2) For rivals, crises present an "opportunity" to rationally update the resolve and motivations of enemies, as well as of potential third parties involved. Learning approximates rational processes, despite the presence of restricting crisis conditions. This is because past interactions have imbued the relationship with a

robust degree of empathy, which allows rivals to rationally process information and counter biases, reinstating accurate perceptions.

3) In non-rival dyads, existing misperceptions about enemy and allied intentions persist throughout crisis episodes. Information is either ignored or appears to fit pre-existing expectations, as a lack of empathy between contestants prevents stimuli from reinstating clarity. Even though their dynamics "feed on" existing cognitive shortcomings, crises do not appear to generate misperceptions.

Learning in non-rival dyads appears to fit the cognitive approach. There is an influential literature which suggests that learning is a psychological process, characterized by heuristics and biases. [28] This narrative suggests that leaders may derive specific conclusions from events in international politics, isolate them from their wider strategic environment and use them as analogies for future circumstances. These lessons prescribe, what should be done in specific situations. They may either be positive ("repeat this success") or negative ("avoid this failure").[29] They are internalized, persist through socialization and may influence future policies.[30]

The shallow, compartmentalized understanding of non-rival adversaries appears to approximate this process. This view renders these lessons little more than generic analogies, which are then "enriched" by biases and preconceptions that manipulate them to fit the psychological needs of the leadership. Finally, "since these events seem clear in retrospect, much of this certainty is transferred to the

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[28] See for example Khong, Y. F. (1992), *Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965,* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
[29] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, p. 234.
[30] Khong, *Analogies at War.*

current situation."[31] As a result, these lessons lead to arbitrary and inaccurate conclusions. Learning then becomes superficial as, individuals "pay more attention to what has happened than to why it has happened."[32]

Georgian assessments followed closely this model. Saakashvili's administration oversimplified reality when Russia did not respond to the 2004 Ossetian crisis. These lessons were transplanted to another situation in 2008 without properly assessing the new strategic environment Tbilisi had to face. These "rough" analogies derived from incidents such as crises have been shown to be important in defining future strategies. Empirical studies suggest that crude analogies may be important in determining future policies. Leng's study on serial crises, based on a sample of eighteen crises that took place between six different dyads, provided strong evidence that crisis outcomes are related over time.[33] Specifically, the use of coercive strategies in previous conflicts increases the war-proneness of actors, to the point that by the third time a crisis erupts, war has been rendered highly probable.

Conversely, learning in rivalries approximates Bayesian updating processes, synthesizing evidence from incidents such as crises with a nuanced understanding of the enemy. Learning from crises in a rivalry context, therefore, does not appear to be a cognitive process, marred by biases, but approximates a deeply rational process, in which actors make optimal use of available information. The possibility for such rational learning processes has already been suggested in the

[31] Jervis, "Deterrence and Perception," p. 21.
[32] Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, p. 228.
[33] Leng, R. (1983), "When Will They Ever Learn? Coercive Bargaining in Recurrent Crises," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 27:3, pp. 379-419.

literature.[34] This project shows that learning may take both forms, depending on the type of the dyadic relationship between contestants.

Finally, the "management" of the rival relationship through learning may increase the potential for de-escalation but it does not necessarily reduce tensions. Constantly adjusting to each other's strengths, weaknesses and mistakes, rivals may be in a position to prolong their conflict. This rivalry feature allows us to see past research efforts under a new light. McClelland argued, for instance, that recurrent conflicts could reduce uncertainty and the probability of escalation.[35] A similar proposition was advanced by Larson, who argued that during the Cold War, the superpowers learned how to avoid conflict from each other's behavior during successive crises.[36] Ironically, therefore, reinstating perceptual accuracy could actually prolong conflict and postpone conflict resolution. In this manner, rivals could render themselves exposed to a prolonged competition, additional crises and more wars than non-rivals, accounting for their persisting belligerence and thus importance in world affairs.

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[34] Levy, "Learning and foreign policy," p. 285.
[35] McClelland, C. (1961), "The Acute International Crisis," *World Politics*, 41:1, pp. 182–204.
[36] Larson, D. (1999), "The US-Soviet Rivalry," in W. Thompson (ed.), *Great Power Rivalries*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, pp. 371-390.

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